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**We Have Found the Messiah: The Twelve and the Historical  
Jesus' Davidic Messiahship**

Michael Vicko Zolondek

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The University of Edinburgh

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## **Declaration**

I, Michael Vicko Zolondek, hereby declare that I have composed this thesis, that the work is my own unless otherwise indicated, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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## **Abstract**

One of the most long-standing and controversial questions in historical Jesus research is that of whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure. This question is part of the broader ‘messianic question’, i.e., the question of whether Jesus thought of himself as a messiah and, if so, in what sense. Virtually every comprehensive work on the historical Jesus addresses this more focused Davidic messianic question at some point, as do numerous journal articles and essays in edited volumes. However, detailed studies devoted to this particular question are lacking. This dissertation is my attempt at such a study.

I will divide this dissertation into two parts, each of which I believe offers a significant contribution to scholarship. The first, ‘Challenging the Status Quo’, will highlight three trends that I believe have dominated recent research on the Davidic messianic question with the aim being to demonstrate that the manner in which scholars have gone about answering this question is significantly problematic and that a fresh approach is therefore needed. I will then offer an approach that I believe will meet this need. The second part of this study, ‘The Making of Jesus the Davidic Messiah’, is where I will attempt to implement the fresh approach that I will have offered. More specifically, I will attempt to determine whether Jesus’ inner circle of disciples, i.e., the Twelve, viewed him as the Davidic Messiah and how Jesus behaved in response to this view. This group dynamic of which Jesus was a part will then serve as the basis on which I will offer my answer to the Davidic messianic question.

In the end, examining this interplay between Jesus and the Twelve leads me to conclude that the historical Jesus was, in fact, a Davidic messianic figure. It would be ideal if I could convince others of this and perhaps move scholars closer to a consensus. However, even if I cannot accomplish this, it is my hope that this study will at least continue to move research on the Davidic messianic question forward.

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## Abbreviations

AB	The Anchor Bible
ABRL	The Anchor Bible Reference Library
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
<i>JBT</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie</i>
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTsup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement
JSPsup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NLCNT	The New London Commentary on the New Testament
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
USFISFCJ	University of South Florida International Studies in Formative Christianity and Judaism
WBC	World Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

# Introduction

## *The Messianic Question*

For the past ~200 years scholars have been confronting a vast array of questions in the ‘quest’ for the historical Jesus.<sup>1</sup> One of the most long-standing and controversial of these is the so-called ‘messianic question’, i.e., the question of whether Jesus thought of himself as a messiah and, if so, in what sense. Virtually every comprehensive work on the historical Jesus addresses it at some point, as well as numerous more focused works in the form of journal articles, essays in edited volumes, and monographs.<sup>2</sup> With so much work available on the messianic question, one might wonder if a dissertation devoted solely to it can offer anything new or helpful to this long-running discussion. I believe that it can.

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars commonly trace the start of the ‘quest for the historical Jesus’ to Hermann Samuel Reimarus, whose work was published from 1774-1778 by Gotthold Lessing. See, e.g., Craig A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography* (rev. ed.; NTTSS, 24; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 13; Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 2-3; Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (JSNTSS 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 34.

<sup>2</sup> The following is only a small sampling of such works: William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Greig (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1971); Joseph Klausner, *Jesus: His Life, Times, and Teachings*, trans. Herbert Danby (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1925); Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007 [1951]); Ernst Käsemann, ‘The Problem of the Historical Jesus’, in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1964 [1954]); Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960); Otto Betz, ‘Die Frage nach dem messianischen Bewusstsein Jesu’, *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963): 20-48; Erich Dinkler, ‘Peter’s Confession and the Satan Saying: The Problem of Jesus’ Messiahship’, in *The Future of Our Religious Past*, ed. James M. Robinson (Chatham: SCM Press Ltd., 1971): 169-202; James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (London: SPCK, 1989); James D. G. Dunn, ‘Messianic Ideas and Their Influence on the Jesus of History’, in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992): 365-381; J. C. O’Neill, *Who Did Jesus Think He Was?* (BIS 11; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995); John J. Collins, ‘Jesus, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls’, in *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. James H. Charlesworth, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Gerbern S. Oegema (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998): 100-119; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, ‘Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah’, parts 1 and 2, *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 4.2 (2006): 155-175 and 5.1 (2007): 57-79 respectively; Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Michael F. Bird, *Are You the One Who Is to Come? The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); Suzanne Watts Henderson, ‘Jesus’ Messianic Self-Consciousness Revisited: Christology and Community in Context’, *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 7.2 (2009): 168-197; Dale C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010); Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012).



### *What This Dissertation Offers*

There are several aspects of this study that I feel will make a significant contribution to research on the messianic question. First, most often the messianic question is treated as a relatively broad question, and it is one that is generally framed in terms of Jesus' self-understanding; one asks whether Jesus thought of himself as some sort of messianic figure. In this dissertation, however, I will be addressing a more nuanced and narrow version of the messianic question, namely, whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure. Asking whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure rather than asking if Jesus thought of himself as the Davidic Messiah is deliberate, and the two questions should not be understood as one and the same. I am attempting to determine whether Jesus took up (at least)<sup>3</sup> the role of Davidic Messiah during his ministry, but I am not attempting to determine whether he might have thought that this should or should not have been his role.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, I will be restricting my study to the question of whether Jesus was a *Davidic* messianic figure, rather than inquiring also into other roles. Although scholars regularly address this more specific Davidic messianic question, this is most often done either in the context of discussions of the broader messianic question or in shorter articles and essays. This entire dissertation, however, will be devoted solely to the Davidic messianic question.<sup>5</sup> I think a study focused on this nuanced and narrow version of the question helpfully fills a gap in the current research.

Second, I have intentionally set out to do something that is fairly different than what one might expect from the standard PhD dissertation. As valuable as it is to have studies that push forward and get down into the weeds of a particular question, I think it is at least equally as valuable to have studies that try to take a step back and challenge dominant trends that have characterized research on that question and propose new ways of doing things. This is precisely what I will attempt to do in this study. More

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<sup>3</sup> The reason why I have included '(at least)' in this description of my question will be explained below when I discuss the boundaries of this study.

<sup>4</sup> Even if one wishes to address the question of what Jesus thought of himself, it will be demonstrated below that this question itself is not as simple as one might at first believe it to be.

<sup>5</sup> For the sake of clarity, I will continue to refer to this question as the 'Davidic messianic question'.

specifically, I wish to challenge three particular trends that I believe have characterized recent scholarship on the Davidic messianic question: (1) the focus on Jesus as an individual; (2) the manner in which the absence of a verbal Davidic messianic claim by Jesus and/or self-exaltation on his part have figured prominently in scholars' answers to the Davidic messianic question; and (3) the emphasis on Jesus' lack of earthly military aspirations. I will argue that virtually none of this offers a path to determining whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure. Challenging these trends will, I think, demonstrate the need for, or at least the benefit of, a fresh approach to answering the Davidic messianic question.

Third, having challenged these trends, I will propose and implement what appears to me to be just such a fresh approach. More specifically, I will attempt to determine whether Jesus' inner circle of disciples, i.e., the Twelve, viewed him as the Davidic Messiah during his ministry and how Jesus behaved in the context of this view, i.e., I will look at the interplay between the Twelve and Jesus.<sup>6</sup> I use 'behaved' intentionally, for although I will look at some of Jesus' own words and deeds, I will not be arguing for any specific interpretation of them; I will simply attempt to establish that Jesus said Y or did Z, rather than attempting to argue that he meant X when he said Y or did Z. Thus, my approach will rely heavily on looking at the group dynamic of which Jesus was a part and only minimally on looking at Jesus the individual. I believe that this fresh approach offers a very solid basis on which to answer the Davidic messianic question.

Ultimately, after having implemented this approach, I come to the conclusion that Jesus was, indeed, a Davidic messianic figure. However, even if I do not persuade others of this, I think that this dissertation will still make significant contributions to the scholarly community of which I hope to be a part.

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<sup>6</sup> How those closest to Jesus viewed him has the potential to tell the historian a great deal about what kind of figure Jesus was, not least because Jesus' culture was one in which there existed the dyadic personality. More will be said about this below, but for now, it will suffice to say that for a person of Jesus' culture, identity and role formation was not simply an individual experience, but would involve the input of the group of which he or she was a part; it is this sort of person that is known as a dyadic personality. See Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights From Cultural Anthropology* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 51-60; Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, 'First-Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individual', in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 72-74, 83-85.

### *How I Will Proceed*

I have divided this dissertation into two parts. Part 1, ‘Challenging the Status Quo’, will include three chapters (1-3). The first of these will review recent scholarship on the Davidic messianic question with the aim being to highlight the three dominant trends noted above. Following this review, I will challenge each of these trends in chapter 2, questioning whether the way in which recent scholarship has gone about answering the Davidic messianic question is the best available. Finally, in chapter 3 I will offer a fresh approach to answering the Davidic messianic question, one that I believe is more appropriate for the task.

Part 2, ‘The Making of Jesus the Davidic Messiah’, will follow and contains 4 chapters (4-7). Chapter 4 will contain a discussion of methodological issues, at the end of which I will set forth my own methodology. In chapter 5, I will begin to implement the fresh approach offered in chapter 3. More specifically, I will look at how the Twelve viewed Jesus during his ministry, concluding that they viewed him as the Davidic Messiah early on and throughout it. I then, in chapter 6, look at how Jesus behaved in the context of his inner circle’s view of him, noting that his behavior could be understood as being in line with this view, i.e., it was *potentially* Davidic messianic behavior. I will, finally, offer my conclusions in chapter 7, where I present reasons why I believe that the hypothesis that Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure is preferable to its alternative(s).

Before setting out on this path, however, I would like to end this introduction with a brief discussion of some of the preliminary issues confronting historical Jesus scholars today.

### *The ‘Historical Jesus’*

It is becoming almost obligatory for anyone writing about the historical Jesus today to explain what one means by the phrase ‘the historical Jesus’.<sup>7</sup> Scholars are

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<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 125-126; Scot McKnight, *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco: Baylor University, 2005), 28-32; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 21-31; Idem., ‘Basic Methodology in the Quest for the Historical Jesus’, in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *How to Study the Historical Jesus*, eds. Tom

correct, I think, to note that the ‘historical Jesus’ is simply the Jesus that one constructs using what one believes are the best methods available to the historian and that this Jesus might not be a completely accurate description of the Jesus who walked the earth.<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately, though, our historical methods were developed and are here in order to help us determine what happened in the past with some degree of probability.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, unless one is taking the position that these methods cannot in any reliable way tell us something significant and relatively reliable about past figures, movements, and events, then what the historian says about the ‘historical Jesus’ should indeed tell us something about the Jesus who lived in the past, even if this picture of Jesus is incomplete and open to revision.

Therefore, when I say something in the present study about ‘the historical Jesus’, or simply ‘Jesus’, I am intending to say something about the Jesus who lived ~2,000 years ago. I do so with the full awareness that, as with any other figure whom historians study, I am simply offering my particular reconstruction of some specific aspect of Jesus’ life based on a particular historical methodology and that what I say about Jesus might not capture the full reality of who Jesus might have been. This is especially the case in this study, given that, as I will emphasize below, it is not at all a full ‘portrait’ or ‘life’ of the historical Jesus.

### *Subjectivity in Historical Work*

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Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 291-307. José Antonio Pagola, *Jesus: An Historical Approximation*, trans. Margaret Wilde (Miami: Convivium Press, 2011), 16-18.

<sup>8</sup> See, again, Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 125; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 1, 21-26; Pagola, *Jesus*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> For some useful discussions by historical Jesus scholars about ‘doing history’, see Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2002 [1979]), 76-94; McKnight, *Jesus and His Death*, 3-46, esp. 4-28; James G. Crossley, ‘Writing about the Historical Jesus: Historical Explanation and “the Big Why Questions”, or Antiquarian Empiricism and Victorian Tones?’, *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 7.1 (2009): 63-90; Robert L. Webb, ‘The Historical Enterprise and Historical Jesus Research’, in *Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus: A Collaborative Exploration of Context and Coherence*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Robert L. Webb (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 9-38. For a few discussions about the work of the historian written outside of the realm of historical Jesus research, see E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), esp. 7-31, 87-108; G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (Glasgow: Collins, 1967), esp. 70-87; Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: Norton, 1995), esp. 254-261. For a rare work on the methodology of ancient history in particular, see Neville Morley, *Writing Ancient History* (London: Duckworth, 1999).

Another issue that is routinely confronted in historical Jesus studies is that of the subjectivity present in one's work. Many scholars today emphasize that everything from our methods to our questions to our data lack objectivity, with the corollary being that our historical conclusions are certainly not objective.<sup>10</sup> I do not necessarily believe this to be problematic. History is known to be a subjective field of research, dependent at many times upon the historian's own creative reconstruction of events based on the available, but often sparse, data.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the question is often raised as to whether the practice of history should be characterized as an art or a science.<sup>12</sup> There are certainly times when one might move beyond the inherent subjectivity of responsible historical work and reach conclusions that the vast majority of one's scholarly community rejects as unreasonable.<sup>13</sup> This, however, is more of an exception than a rule, and there are still many significant questions in historical Jesus research that remain without a clear

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), xxvii-xxviii; Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 4-7; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 107-111; Jacques Schlosser, 'Scholarly Rigor and Intuition in Historical Research into Jesus', in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *How to Study the Historical Jesus*, eds. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 478-485. The recognition of subjectivity in historical work stems largely from challenges posed by postmodernism. As Webb puts it, the rise of postmodernism 'has brought about a seismic shift in many disciplines, including historiography' ('Historical Enterprise', 21; for his full discussion, see 19-38). See also, McKnight, *Jesus and His Death*, 4-28; James G. Crossley, 'Defining History', in *Writing History, Constructing Religion*, eds. James G. Crossley and Christian Karner (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 9-13.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Schlosser, 'Scholarly Rigor', 482-482. Virtually all those cited in note 9 above acknowledge this, with some heavily emphasizing it (Carr) and others accepting it simply as a part of historical work (Elton, Morley).

<sup>12</sup> Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granata Books, 1997), 45-74; Morley, *Ancient History*, 40-45; Crossley, 'Defining History', 13-17; Schlosser, 'Scholarly Rigor', 499.

<sup>13</sup> Morley, *Ancient History*, 45-49, speaks of 'fringe history', examples of which include works that argue that the Pyramids or the statues on Easter Island were constructed by extraterrestrial beings or that the Trojan War took place outside of Cambridge. Denying Jesus' existence is perhaps the best example of such 'fringe history' in historical Jesus studies (see Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* [New York: HarperOne, 2012], for a discussion of such views). Other less extreme examples of conclusions that go beyond what the majority of the field is comfortable with, but which I would not equate with the 'fringe work' denying Jesus' existence, might include denying that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist (see, e.g., William Arnal, 'Major Episodes in the Biography of Jesus: An Assessment of the Historicity of the Narrative Tradition', *Toronto Journal of Theology* 13 [1997]: 201-226) or denying the historicity of the *titulus* reading 'the king of the Jews' (see, e.g., David R. Catchpole, 'The "Triumphal" Entry', in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, eds. Ernst Bammel and Charles F. D. Moule [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984]: 319-334; Adela Y. Collins, *Mark* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2007], 747-748).

scholarly consensus, but instead receive a variety of responsible answers based on the subjective judgments of various reasonable scholars.

My work throughout this study will, therefore, obviously contain the inherent subjectivity of any historical reconstruction, but I do not consider it to have led me to unreasonable historical conclusions. The way I feel best able to demonstrate this throughout my work is by being as transparent as possible in each section of this study. This involves, among other things, justifying the question that I am asking, providing reasons for using the particular sources that I will use, and explaining why I have come to believe that one historical conclusion is to be preferred to its alternative(s). However, if my historical work does contain significant flaws as a result of excessive subjectivity, then I hope that my transparency will at least make this obvious to others and, consequently, make this excessive subjectivity obvious to me as well.

### *The Question and the Reasons for Asking It*

As noted above, keeping myself honest involves justifying the question that I am asking, as the questions one asks can significantly affect one's historical work and conclusions. The question being pursued in this study is whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure, and it seems to me that it is a reasonable one to ask.

It is often noted that Jesus was believed to be and was spoken of as the Davidic Messiah in the post-Easter period.<sup>14</sup> Such a belief requires an explanation as to its origin. This is especially so given the wide range of messianic and eschatological expectations in the Second Temple period.<sup>15</sup> With the various messianic and eschatological figures that were prominent in Jewish thought around the time of Jesus, it was not necessary to speak of him specifically as the Davidic Messiah in order to present him as a significant

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<sup>14</sup> John P. Meier, 'From Elijah-Like Prophet to Royal Davidic Messiah', in *Jesus: A Colloquium in the Holy Land*, ed. Doris Donnelly (New York: Continuum, 2001), 48-61, offers substantial evidence of this. See also Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 154; Martin Hengel, 'Jesus, the Messiah of Israel', in *Studies in Early Christology* (London: T & Clark, 2004), 1-12; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 143-145; Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (WUNT 207; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 320; Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 279-280. Some of the various New Testament traditions that these scholars make reference to include Rom. 1:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Mark 10:47-48; 11:1-10; Matt. 1-2; Luke 1-2; Acts 2:30.

<sup>15</sup> For more on this range of expectations, see 2.3 below.

figure in Israel's history or its eschaton.<sup>16</sup> Why should they have spoken of Jesus in this way at all given that they had numerous other equally or possibly more significant categories? Furthermore, another widely accepted conclusion among historical Jesus scholars is that Jesus was crucified with a *titulus* reading 'the king of the Jews'.<sup>17</sup> This, too, requires an explanation. Why was it that Jesus was crucified specifically as a royal pretender, as 'the king of the Jews'? All of this requires that the historian at least raise the question of whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure, as this would certainly offer a plausible way of explaining both the *titulus* and the post-Easter belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship. I therefore feel that the question I am raising in this study is a reasonable one.<sup>18</sup>

### *Setting Boundaries*

I come, finally, to the last preliminary issue to be addressed here: the boundaries of my study.<sup>19</sup> Even though I have come to believe that Jesus should be considered a Davidic messianic figure, I am not arguing that this is the ultimate or sole role in which the historian should understand the historical Jesus. Jesus could, for example, be seen as a Davidic messianic figure and an eschatological/messianic prophet; he could be understood as a Davidic messianic figure and as the Son of Man or Son of God in some significant sense; and any one of these roles could be understood as an ultimate role of which the others were a part. This would certainly not be exceptional in the history of Jewish ideas; among both Second Temple Jewish texts and historical movements one

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<sup>16</sup> The more the diversity of the messianic and eschatological expectations of Jesus' day is recognized, the more significant the choice to speak of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah becomes.

<sup>17</sup> See Mark 15.26; Matt. 27.37; Luke 23.38; John 19.19. Nils A. Dahl, 'The Crucified Messiah', in *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. Donald H. Juel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 36-37, is well known for affirming the historicity of the *titulus* and is cited frequently by many scholars. For only a handful of the many more who affirm its historicity, see Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, vol. 2, (HTKNT; Freiburg: Basel, 1977) 484-485; Ernst Bammel, 'The Titulus', in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, eds. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 352-364; Gerd Lüdemann, *Jesus After Two Thousand Years: What He Really Said and Did* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2001), 108.

<sup>18</sup> I should emphasize that I am not attempting to argue at this point that Jesus *should* be seen as a Davidic messianic figure because this is the best explanation for the *titulus* or the post-Easter belief in his Davidic messiahship; rather, I am simply observing that the question of whether he was a Davidic messianic figure is a reasonable one to ask on the basis of them.

<sup>19</sup> Setting boundaries for one's work is quite useful, not least because there is always the possibility of others reading more into one's work than one intends.

finds examples of one figure taking up numerous roles or taking up one role that also has numerous characteristics of another.<sup>20</sup> My historical analysis, however, is focused on a very narrow question; it is not at all an attempt to write any sort of life or portrait of the historical Jesus. Therefore, I will not discuss these various other possible (combinations of) roles.

Finally, I would like to emphasize now that this entire study is simply my best attempt to make sense of the evidence available to me. This might seem to be an odd thing to emphasize, but I realize again and again that when writing, one's tone very often does not come through as one desires. I do not intend to present my reasoning and understanding of the evidence as objectively superior to that of anyone else, and I do not want my criticisms of others' views to come off as disrespectful or dismissive. I hope, therefore, that even if my tone does not come through as I desired, the reader will remember what I have said here and forgive any of these lapses.

## **Part 1**

### ***Challenging the Status Quo***

*Radical developments generally take place not by someone's seeing something new but by his seeing everything in a new way*

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<sup>20</sup> See 2.3 below.



## **Chapter 1**

### ***The Status Quo***

#### **1.1 The State of the Question**

Discussing the history of research on any given question concerning the historical Jesus is no easy task. There are numerous approaches one can take when doing so, and there is often a host of issues that one might choose to discuss. As a result, one is often forced, for both the sake of space and clarity, to make certain choices in terms of what to include and exclude in one's discussion, choices that inevitably produce a review of scholarship that has its virtues and its flaws. This is the situation I face currently in attempting to describe the current state of research on the Davidic messianic question. Therefore, I would like to explain briefly how I have chosen to shape my review.

I stated in the introduction that what I consider to be one of my most significant contributions in this study is my attempt to challenge some of the dominant trends that I believe have characterized recent scholarship on the Davidic messianic question and to offer a different way of proceeding. Therefore, although I will begin my review by looking at how the debate concerning the messianic question arose, I will thereafter focus my review of scholarship from Geza Vermes's *Jesus the Jew* onward. If I am to challenge dominant trends in current scholarship, I think Vermes is a fine place to start; his work is often considered to be at least one of the most influential in shaping the last generation of research on the historical Jesus, primarily because of his heavy emphasis on interpreting Jesus within the Judaism(s) of his day.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, because I will challenge the dominant trends that have characterized current scholarship on the Davidic messianic question, my focus in this review will be on highlighting these trends. Considering what I have set out to do in this study, I think that structuring my review in this way best suits my purposes.<sup>22</sup>

## **1.2 Beginning from Wrede**

When I consider the current state of the Davidic messianic question, it seems to me that it was William Wrede's *The Messianic Secret* that essentially marked the beginning of the debate and whose influence remains even today.<sup>23</sup> Although there were certainly works prior to Wrede that discussed the issue of Jesus' Davidic messiahship, the discussion therein appears to me to be significantly different than the debate

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<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, virtually any starting point marking the beginning of one's review will be somewhat arbitrary. I have chosen Vermes because it seemed to be logical and practical for my purposes.

<sup>22</sup> For fuller reviews of historical Jesus research, some of which discuss scholarly positions on the Davidic messianic question, see Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. William Montgomery (Dover Edition; New York: Dover, 2005 [1911]); Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Carlisle: Paternoster); Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998); Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 17-97; William Baird, *History of New Testament Research* (3 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992-2013). For a brief discussion and lengthy bibliography of scholarly works and positions on the broader messianic question, see Bird, *Are You the One*, 24-28, esp. footnotes 20-23.

<sup>23</sup> Although Wrede recognizes some predecessors in *Messianic Secret*, 280-286, which include Gustav Volkmar and Bruno Bauer, I do not think that it can be denied that it was Wrede himself who really changed the course of historical Jesus research. As Baird puts it, 'After the publication of Wrede's *Messianic Secret*, study of the life of Jesus could never be the same' (*New Testament Research*, vol. 2, 147. See also, Hengel, 'Jesus the Messiah', 15-16.

subsequent to Wrede. Prior to Wrede, it seems that the scholarly debate about Jesus' Davidic messianic status focused primarily on the extent to which Jesus sought to spiritualize his role as 'the Messiah', a role that the scholarly consensus of the time seems to have agreed that Jesus was taking up. Generally, if Jesus' Davidic messiahship was affirmed, it was on the basis of his acceptance of the worldly/political, Jewish conception of 'the Messiah'; if it was denied, it was on the basis of his rejection of that conception in favor of a supposedly more enlightened one.

Consider, for example, the work of Reimarus, who, as noted above, is generally recognized as the scholar who began the quest for the historical Jesus. Reimarus argued that if it were 'the object of Jesus' to be understood by others as 'a spiritual saviour', whose death and suffering would 'deliver man, he nevertheless knew that the Jews did not expect a saviour of this kind, and that they had no idea of any other than a worldly deliverer of Israel, who was to release them from bondage and build up a glorious worldly kingdom for them'.<sup>24</sup> Why, then, Reimarus asks, did Jesus 'plainly send to announce...that the kingdom of Heaven is near at hand? For this signified that the kingdom of the deliverer, or of the Messiah, was about to begin'.<sup>25</sup> Reimarus suggested that Jesus would have known that such an announcement would have awakened among the Jews their hope for 'a worldly king', i.e., the Davidic Messiah, and that they would have followed Jesus with the conviction that 'he was this king'.<sup>26</sup> It is thus reasoned by Reimarus that, 'consequently, this must have been [Jesus'] object in so awakening them'.<sup>27</sup>

In David Friedrich Strauss's *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*, the publication of which is generally regarded as the second watershed moment of the quest for the historical Jesus, one again finds conclusions concerning Jesus' Davidic messiahship tied to a discussion about his conception of his role as the Messiah. The

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<sup>24</sup> Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *Fragments*, ed. Charles H. Talbert and trans. Ralph S. Fraser (London: SCM Press, 1971), 10.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 11. Reimarus goes on to provide further arguments for why this must have been the case. He believes, for example, that the Baptist and Jesus did, indeed, know each other before Jesus' baptism and that John explicitly recognized Jesus as this worldly Messiah and that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and actions in the Temple are also evidence of Jesus' intention to be Israel's worldly Messiah (13-27).

very first line of his discussion makes it quite clear that, for Strauss, Jesus was a messianic figure: 'Jesus held and expressed the conviction that he was the Messiah; *this is an indisputable fact*'.<sup>28</sup> It is not only the Gospel traditions that led Strauss to this conclusion, but also because 'the fact that [Jesus'] disciples after his death believed and proclaimed that he was the Messiah, is not to be comprehended, unless, when living, he had implanted the conviction in their minds'.<sup>29</sup> The question for Strauss is simply at what point Jesus began to see himself as the Messiah and what sort of messianic figure he saw himself as.<sup>30</sup> With regard to the former aspect of the question, Strauss is not entirely sure. He suggested that it is likely the case that Jesus, having accepted John's baptism and preached a similar message, 'only gradually attained the elevation of thinking himself the Messiah'.<sup>31</sup> With regard to the latter aspect of the question, i.e., whether Jesus was a worldly/political or spiritual Messiah, Strauss took something of a middle ground.<sup>32</sup> He suggested that Jesus might have anticipated thrones for himself and his disciples in the coming kingdom of God, this being evidence of political/worldly messianism, but that he did not regard 'the means of its attainment as a political revolution, but as a revolution to be effected by the immediate interposition of God'.<sup>33</sup> Strauss explains:

Jesus certainly expected to restore the throne of David, and with his disciples to govern a liberated people; in no degree, however, did he rest his hopes on the sword of human adherents (Luke xxii. 38; Matt. xxvi 52), but on the legions of angels, which his heavenly Father could send him (Matt. xxvi. 53).<sup>34</sup>

Strauss, however, would later move more toward the spiritual, non-Davidic end of this spectrum, while continuing to affirm that Jesus considered himself to be the Messiah.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot (London: S. Sonnenschein, 1906), 284 (my emphasis).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 284-288.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 287. He goes on to state, 'This supposition explains in the simplest manner the prohibition we have been considering, especially that annexed to the confession of Peter [i.e., the prohibition on revealing his messianic identity]. For as often as the thought that he might be the Messiah suggested itself to others, and was presented to him from without, Jesus must have shrunk, as if appalled, to hear confidently uttered that which he scarcely ventured to surmise, or which had but recently become clear to himself'.

<sup>32</sup> See Schweitzer's comments in *Quest*, 92-93.

<sup>33</sup> Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 296.

<sup>34</sup> Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 296.

<sup>35</sup> See Schweitzer, *Quest*, 196-197 for a fuller discussion of Strauss's changing views.

Finally, Johannes Weiss's *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* should be mentioned.<sup>36</sup> Weiss, too, concluded that Jesus thought of himself as the Messiah, but one that would rely fully on God to bring about the kingdom and raise him to his messianic status, i.e., a spiritual rather than worldly/political Messiah. Weiss believed that Jesus was not aiming to establish the kingdom of God himself, but rather was waiting, 'just as the people have to wait, until God once again definitively takes up the rule'.<sup>37</sup> However, once God had initiated the coming of the kingdom, Jesus 'was aware that in this Kingdom he himself would be the "Messiah," the King'.<sup>38</sup> Weiss, in dealing with this 'principle problem with which any theology must come to terms, namely, that of Jesus' *messianic self-consciousness*',<sup>39</sup> argues that the 'birthplace of this consciousness' was at Jesus' baptism. Jesus, however, had a 'loftier' image of the Messiah than the standard Jewish conception, namely, that of the messianic Son of Man.<sup>40</sup> Weiss, then, was on the non-Davidic, spiritual side of the debate.<sup>41</sup>

It seems, then, that prior to the publication of Wrede's work, there was a scholarly consensus that Jesus thought of himself as the Messiah in some way, with the debate concerning Jesus' Davidic messiahship centering on the extent to which he was believed to have spiritualized his messianic role; the more spiritualized, the less Davidic. After Wrede published *The Messianic Secret*, however, this scholarly consensus came to an end, and the discussion concerning Jesus' Davidic messiahship from this point on began to be tied up not with a debate about whether Jesus spiritualized his role as the Messiah, but whether any messianic self-consciousness at all, including a Davidic one, could be traced to Jesus. In other words, the Davidic messianic question became more of an historical problem than an exegetical one.

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<sup>36</sup> Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. and eds. Richard Hyde Hiers and David Larrimore Holland (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985 [1892]).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 115, emphasis original.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 116. Weiss emphasizes that it is not in the present, but in the future, when God acts, that Jesus thought he will become 'the messianic Judge, whom the Baptist promised would be "the one who is mightier," the King (Matt. 25:31, 34; Luke 23:42) before whose throne of judgment all peoples, but especially the Jewish people, must appear' (127).

<sup>41</sup> See his entry, 'King', in *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Volume 1, Part 2, Exorcism – Knowledge*, ed. James Hastings, (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2004 [1906]), 931-932.

There are essentially two significant reasons for this major shift. The first is the fact that Wrede undermined the last-standing ‘objective’ source for historical information about Jesus, namely, the Gospel of Mark. At a time when the Gospel of Mark was, by virtue of its early date, considered an objective and historically reliable text, Wrede showed that not only were Matthew, Luke, and John dogmatic texts, but that Mark, too, was a dogmatic text containing traditions reworked in light of the post-Easter messianic faith.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, Mark’s presentation of Jesus as the Messiah could no longer simply be taken as a reliable historical narrative.

Yet, what really altered the course of the debate was what Wrede saw as a central concern of the dogmatic Gospel of Mark. Wrede believed that the most prominent characteristic of Mark was what he identified as ‘the messianic secret’. He noted that at numerous times in the Markan narrative when Jesus was proclaimed as the Messiah, he ordered that his messiahship not be disclosed.<sup>43</sup> Wrede *tentatively* explained his findings concerning the messianic secret by suggesting that Jesus’ ministry was originally non-messianic in character; Jesus did not think of himself as the Messiah and never claimed the role for himself. It was only after and on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus that belief in his messiahship arose, thus leading to the creation of the messianic secret found in Mark’s Gospel.<sup>44</sup> As Wrede explains:

To my mind this is the origin of the idea which we have shown to be present in Mark. It is, so to speak, a transitional idea and *it can be characterised as the after-effect of the view that the resurrection is the beginning of the messiahship at a time when the life of Jesus was already being filled materially with messianic content.* Or else it proceeded

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<sup>42</sup> James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (SBT 25; London; SCM Press, 1959), 35. See also Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 38; Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, ‘New Literary Criticism and Jesus Research’, in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *How to Study the Historical Jesus*, eds. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 779.

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 24-25, 34-36. He notes passages such as Mark 1.23-25, 34; 3.11-12; 8.27-30; 9.9. Wrede places particular importance on Mark 9.9.

<sup>44</sup> Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 228-230, 236. The tentative nature of Wrede’s conclusion should be stressed, as he himself stressed it when he published them: ‘What I have just been saying should be regarded as a tentative solution....If my deductions are correct, then they are significant for the assessment of Jesus’ historical life itself. If our view could only arise where nothing is known of an open messianic claim on Jesus’ part, then we would seem to have in it a *positive historical testimony for the idea that Jesus actually did not give himself out as messiah.* But this question cannot be fully worked out here’ (emphasis original). As is obvious in this quote, *The Messianic Secret* is not a ‘fully worked out’ argument for answering the messianic question in the negative, even though it would be treated as such by scholars like Bultmann. In fact, as I will note shortly, Wrede himself would come to change his opinion soon after he published this tentative conclusion.

from the impulse to make the earthly life of Jesus messianic, but one inhibited by the older view [i.e., that it was not messianic], which was still potent.<sup>45</sup>

Although the central premise on which Wrede based his explanation of the messianic secret, namely, that the resurrection was the origin of the belief in Jesus' messiahship, would rapidly be challenged by various scholars soon after he published his work,<sup>46</sup> and even though Wrede himself would come to change his opinion concerning the historical Jesus' messianic status,<sup>47</sup> the fuse had been lit and there was no going back. From Wrede onward, scholarship on the Davidic messianic question took on a very different shape.

### **1.3 Wrede's Lasting Effects**

Not only can the origin of the debate concerning the Davidic messianic question be traced to Wrede, but more than a century later, some problematic trends in current research can be said to have stemmed from Wrede's work as well. These trends are (1) the focus on Jesus as an individual; (2) the manner in which the absence of a verbal Davidic messianic claim by Jesus and/or self-exaltation on his part have figured prominently in scholars' answers to the Davidic messianic question; and (3) the emphasis on Jesus' lack of earthly military aspirations.

The heavy focus on Jesus the individual arises out of, among other things, the conflicting nature of scholars today affirming that Jesus' messiahship should be traced to the post-Easter period while at the same time rejecting Wrede's thesis of resurrection equals messiahship, i.e., his specific explanation for the presence of the messianic secret in Mark.<sup>48</sup> Because the messianic secret, and more specifically the resurrection equals messiahship thesis, no longer provides grounds for tracing Jesus' messiahship to the post-Easter period, analyses of Jesus' own words and deeds have had to serve as the

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<sup>45</sup> Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 229.

<sup>46</sup> See the comments of Hengel, *Jesus the Messiah*, 20; Bird, *Are You the One*, 64, 64n3.

<sup>47</sup> See Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie: Vier Studien* (WUNT 138; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), vii, who quote and discuss a letter written by Wrede to Adolf von Harnack in which Wrede writes, 'Ich bin geneigter als früher zu glauben, daß Jesus selbst als zum Messias ausersehen betrachtet hat'.

<sup>48</sup> The focus on Jesus the individual is likely also a lasting effect of the 'great man' view of history. See Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (London: John Knox Press, 2002), 42-62; James G. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism: Quests, Scholarship and Ideology* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012), 68-80.

basis for denying that Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure. Similarly, without any objective gospels from which to draw historical conclusions, as Mark had been thought to be, positive answers to the Davidic messianic question also have demanded a heavy analysis of Jesus' own words and deeds.

The importance in recent research of Jesus' claims, or lack thereof, to a messianic title also stems in large part from Wrede's work. Although scholars today might reject Wrede's solution to the problem of the messianic secret, the problem nevertheless remains, and most today appear to agree that Jesus did not, at least unambiguously, claim a messianic role or affirm any other's confession of him as a messianic figure.<sup>49</sup> This lack of a verbal claim has become a prevalent issue in recent research on the Davidic messianic question; those who answer negatively argue that Jesus did not verbally claim the Davidic messianic role, and those who answer positively argue that he did, in fact, claim it, if not verbally then in some other way.

Furthermore, one of Wrede's central claims was that the character of Jesus' ministry was nonmessianic, and it was largely on the basis of this supposedly nonmessianic ministry that he formulated his solution to the messianic secret. Today, scholarship continues to focus on the (non)messianic character of Jesus' ministry, and because scholars' understanding Davidic messianism has since the time of Wrede commonly carried with it the idea of a militant messiah, the extent to which the historical Jesus had earthly military ambitions remains an important factor today in scholars' decisions as to whether he was a Davidic messianic figure. That these three trends have characterized recent research on the Davidic messianic question can, I think, quite easily be demonstrated by reviewing a variety of the works that have appeared over the last ~40 years.

#### **1.4 Recent Research on the Davidic Messianic Question**

*Geza Vermes*

Vermes's *Jesus the Jew* was a work that went directly against much of the scholarship that had preceded it. Rather than seeking to present a dissimilar Jesus, as

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<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Bird, *Are You the One*, 29; Matthias Kreplin, 'The Self-Understanding of Jesus', in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 3, *The Historical Jesus*, eds. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2474.



many scholars prior to him had done, Vermes insists that one must present a Jesus that makes sense within the context of first-century Judaism(s).<sup>50</sup> After setting this first-century Jewish context in the first part of his book, Vermes goes on to consider the various titles applied to Jesus in the Gospels, one of which is that of Davidic Messiah, and it is here that one finds the aforementioned trends coming through.

Vermes's negative answer to the Davidic messianic question is based almost entirely on an analysis of Jesus as an individual, particularly his teachings. He begins by noting, 'That Jesus never asserted directly or spontaneously that he was the Messiah is admitted by every serious expert, even such a conservative scholar as Vincent Taylor'.<sup>51</sup> In an effort to demonstrate this, Vermes surveys the Gospel evidence, concluding that 'Messianism is not particularly prominent in the surviving teaching of Jesus'.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, it is not the view of those closest to Jesus that matters a great deal for Vermes, but rather how Jesus responded to them, and according to Vermes, whenever the issue of his messiahship was brought up, Jesus either rejected the title or showed no interest in it. According to Vermes, for example, Jesus likely rejected Peter's messianic confession,<sup>53</sup> and he probably answered the question posed at his trial regarding his messiahship evasively, if not with an implied 'No'.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, Vermes concludes that 'there is every reason to wonder if he really thought of himself as such [i.e., as the Davidic Messiah]'.<sup>55</sup> Finally, Vermes finds confirmation that Jesus did not think of himself as the Davidic Messiah in the observation that 'there is no point of contact' between the expectations for the Davidic Messiah and 'Jesus' life and aspirations; he is not portrayed as a contender for the royal throne of David, or as intending to take over the leadership of the Jews against Rome'.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> As Vermes puts it, '[I]n so far as [this book] insists that a convincing study of Jesus of Nazareth must take into account that the Gospels containing the story of this first-century AD Galilean demand a specialized knowledge of the history, institutions, languages and literature of Israel, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, of the age in which he lived, then it is a very Jewish book indeed' (*Jesus the Jew*, 7).

<sup>51</sup> Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 140.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 147-149.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 153-154.

When I consider Vermes's work, I find that all three trends noted above are present. The basis for his answer to the Davidic messianic question is the individual Jesus' own words and deeds; the lack of a verbal claim figures prominently in his reasoning; and he claims that there is 'no point of contact' between Jesus' ministry and Davidic messianism because of his lack of earthly military ambitions.

*E. P. Sanders*

Sanders's opts in his *Jesus and Judaism* to take a different approach than the majority of scholars who came before him. Rather than focusing primarily on the sayings of Jesus, Sanders instead focuses primarily on Jesus' actions, as he believes that it is the actions of Jesus that are the most historically secure;<sup>57</sup> he argues that one could never recover Jesus' precise words, nor could one hope confidently to recover their context, which is just as important as the words themselves.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, there are actions that historians may be virtually certain that Jesus performed, and these, in turn, can help one to establish the meaning of Jesus' sayings with greater probability, which, consequently, allows one to construct a reliable portrait of the historical Jesus.

Having located Jesus squarely within Jewish restoration eschatology, Sanders's analysis of Jesus' actions and sayings leads him to historical judgments concerning what he calls Jesus' 'self-claim'.<sup>59</sup> On the basis of these words and deeds, which he has been able to establish with varying degrees of historical probability, he concludes that Jesus almost certainly saw his role as being that of the eschatological king of Israel, God's viceroy.<sup>60</sup> In fact, Sanders suggests that when Jesus words and deeds are taken into account, this conclusion becomes quite obvious:

The question of Jesus' self-claim has, to understate the case, vexed scholars – it seems to me unduly. Jesus taught about the *kingdom*; he was executed as would-be *king*; and his disciples, after his death, expected him to return to establish the *kingdom*. These points are indisputable. Almost equally indisputable is the fact that the disciples thought that they would have some role in the kingdom. We should, I think, accept the obvious: Jesus

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<sup>57</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 3-18.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 13-18.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 307.

<sup>60</sup> See Ibid., 307, point 5.

taught his disciples that he himself would play the principal role in the kingdom [i.e., the role of eschatological king/God's viceroy].<sup>61</sup>

However, Sanders is hesitant to say that Jesus saw himself as the Davidic Messiah.

There are two reasons for this:

One is that there are only two instances in the Gospels in which Jesus accepts the title "Messiah" (the trial, Mark 14.6f.; Peter's Confession, Mark 8.29f. and parr.), and both are dubious historically. The other is that the title "Messiah" was used by the early church, and the criterion of dissimilarity therefore excludes it from the ministry of Jesus'.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, although he is 'almost certain' about Jesus' kingship, he is less willing to believe that Jesus considered himself the Davidic Messiah.<sup>63</sup>

In Sanders's work one finds that there is a clear focus on Jesus the individual. It is what Jesus taught, said, and did that makes it obvious to Sanders that he thought of himself as God's viceroy, Israel's eschatological king. Furthermore, Sanders's hesitation to go the extra step and conclude that Jesus thought of himself as the Davidic Messiah is a result of the lack of a verbal claim to, or affirmation of, this role by him. Thus, one finds two of the three trends present in Sanders's work. Noteworthy, however, is Sanders conclusion that Jesus' lack of earthly military ambitions may be fairly easily reconciled with his role as Israel's eschatological king and even the role of Davidic Messiah if Jesus did, in fact, see himself in that role.<sup>64</sup> Thus, although two trends are present in Sanders's work, he bucks the third entirely.

*Marcus J. Borg*

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 307. See also *ibid.*, 324 and 326. For the list of things in Jesus' ministry that has led him to this conclusion, see *ibid.*, 307.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Scholars have sometimes criticized Sanders for making an unnecessary distinction between 'royal Davidic Messiah' and 'Israel's eschatological king'/'God's viceroy'. However, I am not sure that Sanders himself is so intent on making this distinction. Ultimately, Sanders reason for using the term 'viceroy' is simply that he does not believe a distinction between 'viceroy' and 'Messiah' is very meaningful. Following the above quote stating why he is hesitant to attribute a messianic self-claim to Jesus, he writes, *'I do not wish to quibble very much about terms. Let us grant that Jesus did not call himself "Messiah" [my emphasis]. We must still take into account the indisputable or almost indisputable facts outlined above. These focus on "king" rather than "Messiah", but they explain why "Messiah" was ever thought to be an appropriate title [emphasis original]. If Jesus said to the disciples only "there will be a kingdom", "you will have a role in it", and "I will share the banquet of the new kingdom with you", the disciples would naturally have been as willing as the Romans to think that he considered himself "king", and they would equally naturally have found the title "Messiah" an appropriate one' (Ibid., 308).*

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 234-235.

Borg begins his study of Jesus with brief methodological reflections. His goal is to supplement historical Jesus studies with insights from other fields of study, such as the social sciences and anthropology.<sup>65</sup> In this way, he ‘seeks to broaden the somewhat narrow focus on literary and historical method that has marked traditional scholarship’.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, although Borg believes that form and redaction criticism have demonstrated that ‘every story and word of Jesus has been shaped by the eyes and hands of the early church’,<sup>67</sup> he contends that radical historical skepticism is unwarranted. ‘Though it is true that the gospels are not straightforward historical documents’, Borg writes, ‘we can in fact know as much about Jesus as we can about any figure in the ancient world’.<sup>68</sup> He goes on to say that although we cannot be certain about *precisely* what Jesus said and did, ‘we can be relatively sure of the *kinds* of things he said, and of the main themes and thrust of his teaching’,<sup>69</sup> and, therefore, ‘we can be relatively certain of the kind of person he was: a charismatic who was a healer, sage, prophet, and revitalization movement founder’.<sup>70</sup>

When it comes to the Davidic messianic question in particular, Borg’s answer rests on his cumulative analysis of Jesus’ words and deeds. This analysis leads him to believe that Jesus, whose life was shaped by his relationship to the Spirit, was a healer and exorcist in the mold of Elijah, Honi, and Hanina, a prophet like the prophets of old, a revitalization movement founder calling the people to go against the current oppressive culture and ‘politics of holiness’, and a sage using observations of nature to teach the people about God.<sup>71</sup> There is no indication in any of Jesus’ words and deeds, however, that he thought of himself as the Davidic Messiah. Anticipating his findings in the opening pages of his work, Borg simply states that Jesus ‘did not proclaim himself’,<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus, A New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), 15.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., emphasis original.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., chapters 3-8.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 5. See also p. 8, ‘If the historical Jesus did not proclaim himself as the Messiah and the Son of God...what then was he like, and what was his mission and message?’ In Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (London: SPCK, 1999), Borg states that he does ‘not think

and later, noting that there are associations between the phrases ‘anointed by God’, ‘son of God’, and ‘Messiah’, with the former two originating with Jesus, Borg concludes, ‘We cannot know if Jesus made these associations himself; no saying which does this explicitly can be confidently attributed to him’.<sup>73</sup> ‘Moreover’, Borg writes, ‘we may surmise that he did not spend a great deal of time thinking about who he was’.<sup>74</sup> For Borg, a charismatic like Jesus simply had no intention of taking up the Davidic messianic role.

In Borg’s answer to the Davidic messianic question, two of the three trends noted above may be observed. Attention is devoted almost entirely to Jesus as an individual, with arguments presented for understanding his words and deeds in a particular way. Furthermore, his negative answer is based largely on the observation that Jesus did not make a verbal claim to Davidic messiahship, nor exalt himself during his ministry. Borg does not appear, however, explicitly to factor in Jesus’ lack of earthly military ambitions when answering the Davidic messianic question.

*James H. Charlesworth*

Charlesworth is another scholar whose extensive knowledge of the Judaism(s) of Jesus’ day makes his answer to the Davidic messianic question worth consideration. He begins by noting that there are three traditions in the Gospels that have forced him to consider how Jesus might have understood himself: Jesus’ selection of Twelve disciples, his entry into Jerusalem, and the parable of the wicked tenants.<sup>75</sup> However, it ends up being the case that he spends the majority of his discussion of Jesus’ self-understanding dealing with the issue of whether Jesus saw himself as the Son of God in some sense.<sup>76</sup> This leaves the reader with only a few pages to discern Charlesworth’s position on Jesus’ messianic self-understanding, and in these pages, it is actually not entirely clear at times what sort of messiahship is being discussed.

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that Jesus proclaimed himself with any of the exalted titles by which he is known in the Christian tradition’ (146-147).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 50. See also, *Meaning of Jesus*, 56, where part of the reason he denies that Jesus had a messianic self-awareness is because ‘in our earliest gospel, a messianic self-claim is not part of Jesus’ own message’.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>75</sup> Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 131-132, 136-139. Charlesworth seems to accept the historicity of all three.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 143-156.

For example, Charlesworth initially states that the entry into Jerusalem might indicate that Martin Dibelius's conclusion that Jesus knew himself to be 'the Messiah chosen by God' may 'indeed be plausible'.<sup>77</sup> 'The Messiah' in this case appears to be the Davidic Messiah, as that was the messiah of Dibelius's discussion. Moreover, Charlesworth goes on to state that 'the data appear to me to be far too ambiguous to sustain such certainty' about this conclusion, but nevertheless suggests:

While Jesus may not have thought himself to be the Messiah, it does not necessarily follow that he held *no* messianic self-understanding. For example, Jesus may have thought that he was, or would be declared by God to be, the Son of Man; if so, then it is conceivable that the messianic overtones of this title, as for example found in 1 Enoch 37-71, would shape his growing awareness of his mission.<sup>78</sup>

His discussion therefore seems to me to indicate that when he refers to 'the Messiah', he is referring to the more common conception of the royal Davidic Messiah. If so, then his initial statement referring to Dibelius seems to indicate that he is open to the idea that Jesus saw himself as the Davidic Messiah.

As Charlesworth continues and concludes his discussion of Jesus' self-understanding, he appears not to draw any firm conclusions concerning the Davidic messianic question, always seeming open to a Davidic messianic self-understanding on the part of Jesus, but never willing to make a conclusive judgment on the matter. He argues that although Jesus might have had some sort of prophetic consciousness, 'we must not too readily conclude that Jesus had a deep messianic self-understanding'.<sup>79</sup> He also suggests, however, that Jesus might, indeed, have had some sort of (presumably Davidic) messianic self-understanding on the basis of his preaching of the kingdom of God, his choice of the Twelve, and his entry into Jerusalem:

[W]hen we confront Jesus' proclamation of the nearness of God's rule, or the Kingdom of God, it simply will no longer suffice to report, as some scholars (including myself) have tended to do for years, that in the Kingdom of God sayings we are confronted only

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 138-139. He quotes and references Martin Dibelius, *Jesus: A Study of the Gospels and an Essay on 'The Motive for Social Action in the New Testament'*, trans. C. B. Hendrick and F. C. Grant (London: SCM Press, 1963), 88.

<sup>78</sup> Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 139.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 153. I am assuming here that 'messianic self-understanding' means a Davidic messianic self-understanding as in the earlier part of his discussion.

with a proclamation and not in any way with a proclaimer. Surely, as the proclaimer, Jesus is contending also that he will play a role in that kingdom....As we have seen by looking at Jesus' symbolic act of choosing twelve disciples, he had a clear intention to be involved in some way with helping to establish a *new messianic age*. Some messianic self-understanding may well have been part of his self-understanding. This self-perception seems also demanded by the manner in which he entered Jerusalem, riding on an animal and accepting salutes.<sup>80</sup>

In the end, though, Charlesworth remains hesitant to make a decision one way or another because he does not believe modern scholarship's understanding of the messianism of Jesus' day is complete enough to affirm or deny for Jesus a particular messianic role.<sup>81</sup>

Interestingly, Charlesworth's uncertainty on the Davidic messianic question stems largely from the fact that he intentionally avoids two of the trends noted above while holding fast to the third. He does not consider a verbal claim and/or self-exaltation on the part of Jesus to have been necessary for him to be seen as having a Davidic messianic self-understanding, nor does he believe Jesus' lack of earthly military ambitions is problematic, arguing that neither is necessarily expected of the Davidic Messiah.<sup>82</sup> However, his almost exclusive focus on Jesus the individual then provides little basis for determining whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure.

#### *Otfried Hofius*

In his essay 'Ist Jesus der Messias? Thesen', Hofius argues for a negative answer to the Davidic messianic question.<sup>83</sup> He begins by discussing in the form of brief theses various aspects of messianism in the Hebrew bible and the extra-biblical literature before turning to the question directly.<sup>84</sup> When he offers his answer, it is concise and clear, being presented in the form of a summary of critical work on the Gospels.<sup>85</sup> In his view, this critical work on the Gospels has shown that Jesus did not refer to himself as

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 155. Again, this appears to be a Davidic messianic self-understanding.

<sup>81</sup> This also comes through clearly in his 'From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects', in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010 [1992]): 3-35.

<sup>82</sup> Charlesworth, 'Messianology to Christology', 13, 20-23. What he says here is much, though not entirely, like what I will argue below.

<sup>83</sup> Otfried Hofius, 'Ist Jesus Der Messias? Thesen' in *Der Messias*, ed. Ingo Baldermann et al. (JBT 8; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993):103-129.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 103-115

<sup>85</sup> He begins his remarks by stating, 'die historisch-kritische Arbeit an den Evangelien führt hinsichtlich der Frage nach dem Wirken und dem Selbstverständnis des >>irdischen<< Jesus m.E. zu den folgenden Ergebnissen' (119).

‘Messiah’,<sup>86</sup> that his ministry provides no reason for scholars to identify him as such,<sup>87</sup> that there are no historical pericopes in which Jesus is ascribed the title or affirms it,<sup>88</sup> that Jesus’ trial before the high priest is historically questionable, and that Jesus’ crucifixion as ‘the king of the Jews’ was based on a false accusation that he was the Davidic Messiah, the end-time king of Israel.<sup>89</sup> Based on these findings of critical work on the Gospels, Hofius concludes as follows:

Hinsichtlich der Frage, ob Jesus der >>Messias<< ist, bedeutet das: Wenn unter >>Messias<< der *Messias Israels* im Sinne der aus bestimmten alttestamentlichen Texten erwachsenen frühjüdischen Messiaserwartung verstanden wird, so ist die Antwort eindeutig eine negative: Dieser Messias Israels ist der im Neuen Testament bezeugte Jesus Christus *nicht*.<sup>90</sup>

In this brief but information-packed section of his essay dealing with the Davidic messianic question, Hofius has dedicated virtually all of his attention on critical findings concerning the individual Jesus. Nothing Jesus said and did, at least nothing that he believes critical scholarship has shown to be historical, indicates that Jesus saw himself as the Davidic Messiah. Moreover, some of the most important of these findings are related to Jesus’ self-claims; Jesus never claimed the Davidic messianic role, and he might have even rejected it. Thus, at least two of the three trends (the individual Jesus and the lack of a verbal claim/self-exaltation) are present in Hofius’s essay.<sup>91</sup>

*Jürgen Becker*

Becker’s *Jesus of Nazareth* is a comprehensive work, covering numerous aspects of Jesus’ life and ministry.<sup>92</sup> In section 4.4.1, Becker confronts the Davidic messianic question head on. Becker begins by offering a review of the diverse messianic and eschatological expectations of the time, after which he explains to the reader, ‘Given this

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 119. It is not entirely clear that he means the Davidic Messiah here, but based on the rest of his statements, I think it is safe to conclude that this at least includes the Davidic messianic title.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 119. He spends the rest of the page and half of the following page explaining why this is so.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 120. Hofius claims that if Mark 8:27-30 is historical, it only demonstrates that ‘Jesus den >>Messias<<-Titel und die von Petrus geäußerte Messiaserwartung entschieden zurückgewiesen hat (s. 8,31ff!)’.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 119-122.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>91</sup> He does not seem to factor the lack of military ambitions on Jesus’ part into his negative answer, although his statement that in the New Testament Jesus is not presented as the Messiah found in Old Testament texts might indicate that he considers his lack of earthly military ambitions to be significant.

<sup>92</sup> Jürgen Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. James E. Crouch (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998).



survey of Early Jewish views, we are ready to ask whether Jesus understood himself (or whether others understood him) as an eschatological messianic figure, and, if so, what connotations the term had'.<sup>93</sup> Although he phrases the question in line with the more general messianic question, his focus in what follows appears to be primarily on answering the question of Jesus' Davidic messiahship.<sup>94</sup>

His answer to the Davidic messianic question 'centers on three Markan pericopes – Peter's confession (Mark 8:27-33 parr.), the controversy about the Son of David (Mark 12:35-37 parr.), and Jesus' confession before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:60-64 parr.)'.<sup>95</sup> In all three cases, Becker is very reluctant to affirm the historicity of the accounts. He believes that Peter's confession is unhistorical because the simple form of the confession, 'the Christ' (ὁ Χριστός), is too unspecific to be meaningful in the Judaism(s) of Jesus' day.<sup>96</sup> The question posed and Jesus' answer in Mark 12:35-37 is said to be clearly meaningful only in the early church where Jesus was the 'Lord' of and 'superior to David', where the 'Christian Christ...is Christ and Lord of all in a much more comprehensive way than the scribes, in the sense of *Ps. Sol.* 17, expected the Messiah to be'.<sup>97</sup> Finally, Becker believes that Jesus' Davidic messianic confession to the high priest belongs to the latest, Markan layer of the text, and, moreover, there were no Christian witnesses present at the trial before the high priest, so it could not be an historical report.<sup>98</sup> All of this leads Becker to conclude that Jesus did not see himself as the Davidic, or any, Messiah, explaining, 'Such a negative judgment about the messianic claim of Jesus (however one might understand the content of that claim) fits well with the earliest impulses to create christological confessions after Easter', and that 'Jesus

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 186-195, quote found on 195.

<sup>94</sup> After all, this section is entitled 'Jesus and the Expected Messiah ben David'.

<sup>95</sup> Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 195.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 197. Becker also argues here that the question and answer dialogue is meant to represent a question 'which later Christians are going to ask, and the answer that he [the high priest] receives from Jesus is the confession of the later Christians, simply reworded as an I-statement. Jesus affirmation, in other words, is the later church's confession, put into his mouth in order to explain his fate and his future' (197).

himself had made no unequivocal christological statements that could serve as the basis for the church's reflection'.<sup>99</sup>

Although it is brief, I have tried here to highlight in Becker's treatment of Jesus' Davidic messiahship two of the three trends. He focuses primarily, if not solely, on Jesus the individual, not only here in this section dealing with his Davidic messiahship, but throughout his work. Furthermore, Jesus' lack of a verbal claim and/or self-exaltation is an indication for Becker that he did not have a Davidic messianic self-understanding.<sup>100</sup> He does not, however, appear to factor into his answer Jesus' lack of earthly military ambitions.

*John J. Collins*

Collins's *The Scepter and the Star* is a valuable work for anyone studying messianism, but it is worth considering here for its section devoted to a discussion of 'Jesus and the Davidic Messiah'.<sup>101</sup> After having reviewed the various texts and historical movements that inform scholars' understanding of the Davidic Messiah, Collins notes that 'the violent destruction of the wicked is a standard element in the repertoire of the Davidic messiah'.<sup>102</sup> This, however, creates a dilemma for the scholar studying Jesus according to Collins, for, 'There is little if anything in the Gospel portrait of Jesus that accords with the Jewish expectation of a militant messiah', yet, he was crucified as 'the king of the Jews' and believed to be the Davidic Messiah in the post-Easter period.<sup>103</sup>

Collins's answer to the Davidic messianic question is found in his attempt to resolve this dilemma. He suggests that Jesus might have taken up the Davidic messianic role only at the very end of his ministry. He notes that 'the only episode in Jesus' career that fits a scriptural paradigm for a kingly messiah is the triumphal entry into

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 197. He goes on to say that 'Jesus' christological exaltation began with Easter' (197). That Jesus did not see himself as the Davidic Messiah is also explicitly stated by Becker on p. 212.

<sup>100</sup> Jesus' lack of self-promotion is yet again stated explicitly on p. 217: 'Jesus did not preach himself; he proclaimed the Kingdom of God, and he promoted it with his own actions'.

<sup>101</sup> John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 204-210.

<sup>102</sup> Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 204-205.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 205. See also Idem., 'Jesus, Messianism', 112.

Jerusalem'.<sup>104</sup> He believes that this is likely an historical event and that it 'also implies a royal claim':

While Jesus functions as a prophet rather than as a royal pretender for most of his career, the manner of his entry into Jerusalem appears to be an enactment of the coming of the Davidic messiah. Here Jesus appears to change roles, from that of prophetic herald of the kingdom to that of king who ushers it in.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, Collins here seems to be willing to conclude that Jesus took on the role of the Davidic Messiah. Elsewhere, however, he appears to be slightly less willing to reach this conclusion.

In his essay, 'Jesus, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls',<sup>106</sup> he again notes the 'gap between the non-militant, non-royal career of Jesus as reported in the Gospels and his death and subsequent veneration as king-messiah', but here he states that 'it may not be possible to bridge it', and rather than attempting to bridge it by suggesting that in entering into Jerusalem the way he did Jesus was taking up the Davidic messianic role, as he had done earlier, he instead simply offers 'some suggestions...as to how a prophet came to be thought of as a king'.<sup>107</sup> His suggestion is that, given Jesus' preaching that the kingdom of God was at hand, the Romans perhaps did not make a clear distinction between an eschatological prophet who might be thought of as a violent revolutionary, like Theudas or the Egyptian, and an eschatological king. Similarly, his followers perhaps thought that Jesus might be the one who would bring in the kingdom of which he spoke.<sup>108</sup> However, he never states here, as he did in *Scepter and Star*, the opinion that Jesus possibly was intent on taking up the Davidic messianic role. Rather, he simply states that because 'Jesus appears reticent about his own claims, but unwilling to contradict the claims made on his behalf', much like the modern case of Menahem Schneerson, 'we should hardly be surprised that we are unable to establish the self-identity of Jesus'.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 206.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 206. He goes on to say that although it is possible that Jesus did not intend to put himself forth explicitly as the Davidic Messiah, 'At the very least, the triumphal entry at least affirms the expectation of the Davidic messiah and in no way rejects it' (206-207).

<sup>106</sup> Collins, 'Jesus, Messianism': 100-119.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 116-117.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 117-118.

In his work offering these somewhat different positions, or, to put it more fairly, one position that is slightly more cautious than the other, all three trends can be observed. Collins focuses on Jesus the individual to determine whether he was taking up the Davidic messianic role; his lack of earthly military ambitions is a central problem for Collins; and he is unable to come to a clear conclusion because Jesus was reticent about making a claim for himself.<sup>110</sup>

*John P. Meier*

In his essay, 'From Elijah-like Prophet to Royal Davidic Messiah', Meier confronts the issue of Jesus' Davidic messiahship directly and in detail, something he has not yet been able to do in his series *A Marginal Jew*.<sup>111</sup> He begins by explaining how his work in the first three volumes of *A Marginal Jew* had culminated in a portrait of Jesus as an Elijah-like prophet.<sup>112</sup> However, he goes on to say that 'this conclusion...has created major problems for me as I envision the fourth and final volume of *A Marginal Jew* – in other words, as I reach the end of the story'.<sup>113</sup> The problem is this: 'Inevitably, the end of the story forces one to confront a very different portrait of the historical Jesus from that of the Elijah-like prophet: Jesus the royal Davidic Messiah who winds up being crucified by the Romans under the hermeneutically recycled title King of the Jews'.<sup>114</sup> Meier spends the rest of the essay attempting to solve this problem, and it is in the course of doing so that he puts forth an answer to the Davidic messianic question.

Meier begins by surveying a specific set of data. He observes that there is a vast amount of attestation, from Paul to the Gospels to Revelation, that Jesus was considered to be the Davidic Messiah in the pre-Easter period.<sup>115</sup> He next explains these data by suggesting that the historical Jesus was believed to be of Davidic descent.<sup>116</sup> He then goes on to ask the question of how this belief coheres with Jesus' view of himself as an Elijah-like prophet, which amounts essentially to asking whether Jesus saw himself as

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<sup>110</sup> The lack of military ambitions, however, appears to be far more significant for Collins than Jesus' reticence to claim a role for himself.

<sup>111</sup> Meier, 'From Elijah-like Prophet to Royal Davidic Messiah': 45-83.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 47-61.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 61-64.

the Davidic Messiah. He answers this question by looking at various things Jesus said and did. Some of the more important are Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God, which took place in Galilee and Jerusalem; his belief that what he was doing was somehow making present this kingdom; his claims to divine authority; his entry into Jerusalem; and his action in the Temple.<sup>117</sup> In the end, Meier seems to find in Jesus' ministry aspects of both the roles of Elijah-like prophet and royal Davidic Messiah, which lead him to believe that Jesus combined these roles in some way.<sup>118</sup>

Yet, for Meier, 'the ultimate, internal coherence between the eschatological miracle-working prophet like Elijah and the royal Son of David (or Davidic King or Davidic Messiah) remains elusive if not insoluble'.<sup>119</sup> He conjectures that Jesus might have initially taken up the Elijah-like role intentionally,

almost as a way of countering or refusing to countenance hopes harbored by followers that he was the prophesied royal Messiah of the house of David – a Messiah understood by them in this-worldly, political, and even military terms. If it be true that Jesus did not openly make claims for himself as the Davidic Messiah during the public ministry, if indeed he purposely suppressed such ideas with his self-chosen role as the Elijah-like prophet, then the triumphal entry and the temple demonstration constitute a notable break by Jesus with his own reticence and mode of self presentation.<sup>120</sup>

He then goes on to suggest that Jesus' understanding of the Davidic messianic role might have been different than the popular expectation, but he simply cannot solve the problem with which he had been confronted at the start of the essay. Ultimately, then, although unsure of what to make of his findings, Meier appears to be confident that Jesus did, in some way, take up the Davidic messianic role.<sup>121</sup>

One can see clearly here that Meier's answer to the Davidic messianic question relies almost entirely on an analysis of Jesus the individual. It is Jesus' preaching, his entry into Jerusalem, his Temple action, etc., that lead Meier to believe that he took up the role of Davidic Messiah at some point in his ministry. Furthermore, the primary reason why Meier is unsure what to make of Jesus' Davidic messiahship is because of

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 64-69.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

Jesus' lack of a claim to that role along with his lack of earthly military ambitions. Thus, all three of the trends are found in Meier's work.

*Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer*

Hengel and Schwemer have each published an essay that takes on the question of Jesus' Davidic messiahship.<sup>122</sup> Hengel begins his essay by noting how Jesus was believed to be the Messiah very early on in the post-Easter period.<sup>123</sup> He goes on to argue that this belief could not have arisen only as a result of the resurrection of Jesus, as had been argued by various scholars, but must have gone back to Jesus' ministry itself.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, the *titulus* indicates for Hengel that the issue of Jesus' Davidic messiahship must have come up during his ministry and not simply in the post-Easter period.<sup>125</sup>

Hengel then appears to begin to formulate his answer to the Davidic messianic question on the basis of this data.<sup>126</sup> He argues that Jesus' Davidic messiahship is evident in the healing of Bartimeaus, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, and the Temple action.<sup>127</sup> Hengel notes also that Jesus' prophetic self-understanding might cohere quite well with a Davidic messianic self-understanding, writing that one cannot '*a priori* completely tear the "prophetic" from the "kingly" Messiah. Each is "Spirit-bearer" in a unique way, and this connects the two', and that 'the "kingly", and the "prophetic",

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<sup>122</sup> Hengel, 'Jesus the Messiah of Israel': 1-72; Anna Maria Schwemer, 'Jesus Christus als Prophet, König und Priester', in Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer's *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie: Vier Studien* (WUNT 138; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). Together they also published *Jesus und das Judentum*. I am discussing their earlier articles rather than this more comprehensive work simply because it is easier to discern their positions on the Davidic messianic question, whereas in the more comprehensive *Jesus und das Judentum*, it is difficult for me to discern when they are talking about Jesus taking up the specific Davidic messianic role and when they are talking about a more comprehensive sort of messianic role (see *Jesus und das Judentum*, 461-544).

<sup>123</sup> Hengel, 'Jesus the Messiah', 1-11.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-14.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-55.

<sup>126</sup> As was the case with some previous scholars, it is difficult to tell when Hengel is discussing Jesus' Davidic messiahship in particular rather than his messiahship in general. He seems only very briefly to address specifically Jesus' Davidic messiahship at this point in the essay, even though his wider and more comprehensive argument in the essay is that Jesus was a messiah of some sort.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-57, 69-70.

Messiah can be teacher and proclaimer of God's will, and even more so, of course, judge'.<sup>128</sup> In the end, therefore:

About Jesus, one may say that he made his appearance in Galilee as "Anointed of the Spirit", in the manner of Isa. 61:1ff., and was executed in Jerusalem as "King of the Jews". That his family was reported to be descended from David, that he addressed the entire "twelve tribes", that he entered Jerusalem accompanied by a crowd greeting him as a messianic figure.<sup>129</sup>

Thus, although it is only a part of his broader messianic status, Hengel appears to be confident that Jesus was at least a Davidic messianic figure.

Schwemer's essay addresses the Davidic messianic question more directly than Hengel in the section entitled, 'Jesus als der messianische König'. She begins by looking at the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke to establish that Jesus had been seen in the post-Easter period as being of Davidic ancestry and heir to David's throne,<sup>130</sup> and she traces this kingly, Davidic understanding of Jesus to the events in Jerusalem during his final days because, she says, 'die Kindheitsgeschichten sind ja erst aufgrund der Passion entstanden'.<sup>131</sup> When she gets into the history of Jesus' last days, she focuses particularly on the things Jesus said and did. She discusses his entry into Jerusalem, his action in the Temple, his answer to James and John's request to sit on thrones, his promise made to the disciples that they will sit on thrones in the coming kingdom, and his crucifixion as 'the king of the Jews'.<sup>132</sup> It is on the basis of these things that she has the confidence to conclude that Jesus had taken up, along with other roles, the kingly, Davidic messianic role, stating: 'Er [Jesus] diente seinem Volk, indem er zeichenhaft die Funktion des endzeitlichen Königs einnahm bei Einzug und Tempelreinigung, sich als „König der Juden“ hinrichten ließ und seinen Jüngeren die Teilhabe an der messianischen Herrschaft zusagte'.<sup>133</sup>

In the work of Hengel and Schwemer, one finds only the presence of the first trend, i.e., a focus on Jesus the individual. They both devote attention particularly to

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 69

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Schwemer, 'Jesus Christus', 217-219. Earlier she also drew attention to Paul's letters (195-197).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 219-226. She appears to take all of these events as historical.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 230.

Jesus' last days in Jerusalem as they conclude that Jesus took on the Davidic Messiah role. However, neither appears to make much of Jesus' lack of earthly military ambitions, and both explicitly mention that a lack of a verbal claim need not count against seeing Jesus as a Davidic Messiah.<sup>134</sup>

*James D. G. Dunn*

Dunn's general approach to studying the historical Jesus is encapsulated in the title of his most thorough work on him, *Jesus Remembered*. He focuses on establishing the characteristic themes and features in the Gospels, i.e., how Jesus was remembered, rather than spending a great deal of time arguing for or against the authenticity of any given saying or deed.<sup>135</sup> With regard to the Davidic messianic question in particular, Dunn's approach is essentially two-fold. He first asks who others thought Jesus was and then, secondly, asks who Jesus thought he was. The former is revealed through Dunn's analysis of various traditions in which opinions about who Jesus was are expressed; the latter is determined by going back through most of these same traditions and looking at Jesus' reaction to these others' speculations about him.

Dunn leaves little doubt that one of the roles others might have believed Jesus to be fulfilling was that of the Davidic Messiah. In the first place, Dunn suggests that it is 'a priori likely that an individual who spoke memorably of God's kingdom, who gathered disciples around him, and who created something of a stir would have raised in many minds the equivalent to the modern question "Who does he think he is?"'<sup>136</sup> He continues, 'It should now be clear that "claimant to royal messiahship" was one possible answer to be considered'.<sup>137</sup> In the second place, there are numerous Gospel traditions, 'whose historicity *in toto* is very hard to dismiss...in which the issue of messiahship (or the equivalent religio-political claim) is central'.<sup>138</sup> These traditions include Jesus' trial, the question about David's son in Mk 12.35-37, the question about paying tribute to Caesar, the cleansing of the Temple, Peter's confession, the triumphal entry, and more.

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<sup>134</sup> See Hengel, 'Jesus the Messiah', 58-59; Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum*, 545.

<sup>135</sup> See Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 335, where he sums up his approach.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 627.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 628.



All these episodes ‘raised in one way or another the question whether Jesus was to be regarded as the expected royal Messiah....The question posed by Pilate, providing him with legal justification for Jesus’ execution, was surely posed by others at earlier stages in Jesus’ mission’.<sup>139</sup>

Having established that the question of Jesus’ messiahship was raised by others, Dunn remarks that it is ‘inconceivable that his disciples did not recall and reflect on his reaction to it’, and he asks the questions, ‘Did [Jesus] share that speculation? Did he regard himself as Messiah, son of David?’<sup>140</sup> Dunn’s reading of the evidence suggests to him that Jesus’ response was negative: he reacted against the role of Messiah;<sup>141</sup> he was reticent to accept the acclamation<sup>142</sup>; he attempted to ‘damp down’ the expectation that he was the Messiah;<sup>143</sup> and he was simply ‘[unwilling] to accept the title of Messiah/king’.<sup>144</sup>

This evidence leads Dunn to answer the Davidic messianic question with ‘a qualified No!’<sup>145</sup> ‘No’ because Jesus never used the title and seems to have distanced himself from it whenever it was applied to him.<sup>146</sup> ‘No’, moreover, because it is clear ‘that Jesus ignored or refused or rejected the dominant current understanding of the royal Messiah as a royal and military power like Herod the Great.’<sup>147</sup> ‘Qualified’ because scholars cannot be certain that they fully understand Jewish messianic expectations, and therefore, ‘there is a legitimate query as to whether the then current understanding of the royal Messiah’s role was the only one possible from Israel’s prophetic texts’.<sup>148</sup> If, however, the current scholarly understanding of the role of Davidic Messiah is indeed accurate, then Jesus surely rejected it in Dunn’s opinion.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 646.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 647.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 647.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 648.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 652.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 653.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> In the conclusion of *Jesus Remembered*, Dunn summarizes his answer to the messianic question thusly: ‘Of the more weighty terms used in relation to Jesus, it can hardly be doubted that he was executed as a claimant to the throne of David (“king of the Jews”). It is equally clear that the question whether he was

All three trends noted above are evident in Dunn's work. Despite the fact that Dunn canvasses the view that others held of Jesus, looking at how those from his disciples to his opponents might have viewed him, his focus remains squarely on Jesus the individual. It is how 'Jesus himself reacted to these possible role models and to any attempts to identify him with them' that is central for Dunn.<sup>150</sup> It was Jesus who was 'confronted' with the claim of others that he was the Davidic Messiah, and it is Jesus who stands outside and over the group, judging the roles others have put forth for him and determining which are the most appropriate for him. In other words, the role the others' view of Jesus plays in his work is simply to establish that Jesus was confronted with the issue of Davidic messiahship, but it is Jesus the individual's take on that matter that is of central importance for answering the Davidic messianic question.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, it is evident that when Dunn does look at the individual Jesus, the basis for his negative answer to the Davidic messianic question is Jesus' lack of a verbal claim to that role as well as his lack of earthly military ambitions.

#### *Three Additional Works*

There are three additional works that have appeared in recent years which demonstrate that these trends have persisted even in some of the latest research on the Davidic messianic question: Joseph Fitzmyer's *The One Who Is to Come*, Andrew Chester's *Messiah and Exaltation*, and Michael Bird's *Are You the One Who Is to*

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the expected *royal Messiah* had become a crucial issue some time before his execution, not least among his disciples. Somewhat troublesomely for later Christian belief in Messiah/Christ Jesus, however, Jesus seems to have found no role model in the prevalent hope for a Davidic prince who would liberate the nation from Roman rule. He is remembered as forbidding talk of his role in such terms and as being unwilling to describe himself as such when the question was put to him formally at the end. His sense of what he was about, his own aim, was evidently not well served by the dominant imagery of the king of Israel, the king of the Jews. If the title 'Messiah' subsequently proved indispensable in earliest Christian evaluation of Jesus, it is because his mission drew in other parts of Jewish expectation and gave the title new content, not because he fitted the hopes and expectations of the time' (889).

<sup>150</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 617.

<sup>151</sup> Note again Dunn's formulation of the question: 'Was Jesus remembered as claiming to be the royal Messiah of prophetic and eschatological expectation? And can we deduce from the evidence reviewed whether Jesus regarded himself as the Royal Messiah....So how did Jesus react? Did he claim to be the long-hoped-for David's royal son?' (652).

*Come?*<sup>152</sup> For the sake of space, I will only very briefly discuss these works, pointing out where in them these trends are apparent.

Fitzmyer, Chester, and Bird all follow the trend of focusing on Jesus individually. Fitzmyer treats the Davidic messianic question only very briefly, which is understandable given that his primary focus is simply analyzing the use of the term ‘Messiah’ in various types of literature, including the New Testament. When he does address the Davidic messianic question, he focuses heavily on Jesus’ words and deeds and what they might tell us about how Jesus understood his own role.<sup>153</sup> Chester devotes more time to answering the Davidic messianic question, but when doing so, he focuses almost solely on Jesus, examining his teachings and actions over the course of his ministry in an attempt to discover if, when, and to what extent he might have understood himself to be, and put himself forth as, the Davidic Messiah.<sup>154</sup> Bird also focuses almost all of his attention on Jesus as an individual in the course of answering the Davidic messianic question. After looking at the messianic beliefs of Jesus’ day, Bird dedicates the majority of his remaining space to Jesus’ words and deeds. He does spend one page discussing the disciples’ messianic enthusiasm for Jesus, but this is done in an effort to demonstrate that Jesus made these claims and ‘injected messianic enthusiasm into his disciples’,<sup>155</sup> rather than as part of an effort to understand the dynamic between Jesus and his followers, that is, how Jesus and his followers influenced each other, and how out of this group dynamic Jesus emerged as the group’s Davidic Messiah.

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<sup>152</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (WUNT 207; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Michael F. Bird, *Are You the One Who Is to Come? The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

<sup>153</sup> Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come*, 138-141. After asking, ‘What led early Christians to regard their crucified leader as Χριστός?’, he begins considering answers to this question and states: ‘One might be tempted to say that Jesus regarded himself as “Messiah,” but such an explanation is far from clear’ (138). He then supports this statement by looking at Jesus’ response to the High Priest’s question and Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi (138-140).

<sup>154</sup> Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 311-324. After looking at some of Jesus’ words and deeds, Chester writes, ‘Jesus can then be seen as acting in fulfillment of both a royal and a prophetic messianic role, and of deliberately identifying himself with both, and with an overlap of royal and prophetic traits in each case. That does not, however, allow us simply to run the two together into a composite royal-prophetic messianic profile. Nor does he [sic] take on what would be seen as an obvious messianic identity in first-century Palestine. We need, then, to probe further to see how Jesus understood himself and wished himself understood’ (320). In probing further, he maintains his focus on Jesus’ words and deeds.

<sup>155</sup> Bird, *Are You the One*, 72.

Fitzmyer and Chester also believe that it is significant that Jesus did not claim to be a Davidic Messiah, nor take up an earthly military role. Fitzmyer draws attention to the fact that Jesus never explicitly claims Davidic messiahship for himself, and he further entertains the possibility that when Jesus commands silence regarding his messianic status at Caesarea Philippi, the ‘prohibition may have stemmed from Jesus’ awareness of the political or militant overtones that “Messiah” had acquired in Roman-occupied Judea of his time’.<sup>156</sup> Chester similarly observes that Jesus does not appear to have claimed Davidic messiahship, arguing that the reason for this might have been his rejection of an earthly military role.<sup>157</sup> Bird, however, like some of the other scholars discussed above, does not find either Jesus’ lack of a Davidic messianic claim or his rejection of an earthly military role to be significant, not necessarily because a verbal claim and earthly military role were not required of a Davidic Messiah, as I will argue below, but instead because Jesus was redefining expectations for the Davidic Messiah.

In the end, Fitzmyer and Chester conclude that Jesus likely rejected the Davidic messianic role, possibly in favor of a different sort of messianic role, whereas Bird appears to believe that Jesus was taking on to some extent the role of Davidic Messiah.<sup>158</sup> But whatever their differences in terms of their conclusions, this brief review of the work of Fitzmyer, Chester, and Bird should suffice to demonstrate that the three trends I noted above show little sign of fading.

### **1.5 Summary of the Current State of the Question**

Although every one is not present in each of the works considered here, this review demonstrates clearly, I think, that three trends can be said to have characterized recent research on the Davidic messianic question. First, attention has focused virtually solely on Jesus as an individual, with an enormous amount of effort being devoted to understanding and interpreting his words and deeds. When the views of others among Jesus’ group are taken into consideration, Jesus stands outside and above the group,

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<sup>156</sup> Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come*, 139.

<sup>157</sup> Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 318-324.

<sup>158</sup> Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 322-324; Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come*, 140-141; Bird, *Are You the One*, 76, 114-115, 158-160.

evaluating its opinion of him.<sup>159</sup> Second, scholars regularly allow the absence of a verbal claim to Davidic messiahship on the part of Jesus and/or self-exaltation by him to feature prominently in their answers to the Davidic messianic question. Third, Jesus' lack of earthly military ambitions is often equated with a rejection of the Davidic messianic role, or it makes scholars who are otherwise inclined to conclude that Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure hesitant to do so. Having highlighted these trends, I would like now to explain why I feel each is significantly problematic.

## **Chapter 2**

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<sup>159</sup> The group's view is often treated almost as some sort of foil for Jesus the individual.

# The Challenge

## 2.1 The Individual Jesus

I begin with the focus on Jesus the individual. There are three reasons why I believe that approaching the Davidic messianic question in this manner is problematic. The first is that anthropological and sociological research appears to demonstrate that for a person in Jesus' culture the process of role formation, and the subsequent acting out of that role, was significantly more group-centered than the above-reviewed scholarship would indicate. More specifically, how others viewed an individual, particularly those close to this individual, had the potential to play a significant part in an individual's understanding of his or her own role.<sup>160</sup> As Bruce J. Malina explains:

Persons always considered themselves in terms of the group(s) in which they experienced themselves as inextricably embedded. We might describe such a psychological orientation as 'dyadism'....The dyadic person is essentially a group-embedded and group-oriented person (some call such a person 'collectively-oriented'). Such a group-embedded, collectivistic personality is one who simply needs another continually in order to know who he or she really is....Such persons internalize and make their own what others say, do and think about them because they believe it is necessary for being human to live out the expectations of others.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> This is known as a 'dyadic' or 'group-oriented' personality. See Malina, *The New Testament World*, 58-67; Malina and Neyrey, 'First-Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individual', 67-69. In fact, Malina goes so far as to say that one's individual self-consciousness is of little importance when it comes to the role that a dyadic personality feels compelled to live out: 'Since dyadic personality derives its information from outside of the self and, in turn, serves as a source of outside information for others, anything unique that goes on inside of a person is filtered out of attention. Individual psychology, individual uniqueness, and individual self-consciousness are simply dismissed as uninteresting and unimportant' (*New Testament World*, 67). See also Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh's *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (2nd edition; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 264: 'The Western question about Jesus' "self-understanding" is misguided. The private self is irrelevant...Discovering identity is not self-discovery...identity is clarified and confirmed only by significant others'.

<sup>161</sup> Malina, *New Testament World*, 62. See also, Malina, *New Testament World*, 58: 'What sort of personality sees life nearly exclusively in terms of honor? For starters, such a person would always see himself or herself through the eyes of others. After all, honor requires a grant of reputation by others. So what others tend to see is all-important. Further, such individuals need others for any sort of meaningful existence since the image such persons have of themselves has to be indistinguishable from the image held and presented to them by their significant others in the family, tribe, village, city, or ethnic group. In this sense, a meaningful human existence depends on a person's full awareness of what others think and feel about oneself, along with one's living up to that awareness'. Malina summarizes his findings as follows: 'According to the perceptions of the group of foreigners we are studying in our New Testament texts, it would seem that a meaningful human existence depends upon an individual's full awareness of what others think and feel about him, and his living up to that awareness....As a result, the person in question does not think of himself or herself as an individual who acts alone regardless of what others think and say. Rather, the person is ever aware of the expectations of others, *especially significant others*, and strives

Although Malina's findings concerning the dyadic personality are widely utilized by New Testament scholars, there are some who have criticized the methodology he has employed in reaching his conclusions, as well as the degree to which he emphasizes the dyadic nature of persons. However, even in the face of these criticisms, I think his work still poses a strong challenge to this first trend.

I begin with the criticisms aimed at Malina's methodology. David G. Horrell and Louise J. Lawrence both have questioned whether the use of models is the best way to go about doing anthropological and social-scientific research into Jesus' world, a methodology that is explicitly employed by Malina. Horrell notes that 'a model-based approach can lead to historically and culturally variable evidence being interpreted through the lens of a generalized model of social behaviour',<sup>162</sup> and although those who use models are quick to caution that models are only 'heuristic devices' used to describe typical tendencies of a culture rather than concrete social laws,<sup>163</sup> Horrell is still skeptical about the ways in which the 'rich diversity of human behaviour is thereby homogenized and explained in terms of what is "typical" – which can actually be no real explanation at all'.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, as Lawrence argues, the use of models carries with it the danger of predetermined results:

Once evidence is viewed within the framework of a particular model, it is difficult, if not impossible, to consider viewpoints which do not fit that framework. Of course all

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to match those expectations' (*New Testament World*, 67, my emphasis). See also, Malina and Neyrey, 'First-Century Personality', 84: 'The point is, dyadic persons need constantly to be told their role, identity and status by those around them'.

<sup>162</sup> David G. Horrell, 'Models and Methods in Social-Scientific Interpretation: A Response to Philip Esler', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 22 (2000), 84. See also his statements in 'Social-Scientific Interpretation of the New Testament: Retrospect and Prospect', in *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, ed. David G. Horrell (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 19-20.

<sup>163</sup> Philip F. Esler, 'Review of D G Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence*', *Journal of Theological Studies* 49 (1998), 256. In addition to stressing that models cannot be understood as concrete laws, Esler emphasizes that a model is not 'a description of empirical reality, but rather an explicit simplification and accentuation of empirical reality used for organizational and heuristic purposes and derived from contemporary social-scientific research' ('Models in New Testament Interpretation', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* [2000], 108). See also Zeba A. Crook, 'Structure versus Agency in Studies of the Biblical Social World: Engaging with Louise Lawrence', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29.3 (2007), 266: 'Despite my care in speaking of tendencies, some will still object to these sweeping generalizations. Let me therefore reiterate: tendencies are not social laws, and exceptions do not contradict tendencies.'

<sup>164</sup> Horrell, 'Models and Methods', 84. See also Horrell's discussion in 'Social-Scientific Interpretation', 12-16, 19-20.

research is necessarily conducted from a particular perspective, however, it is not true that all research need necessarily be proscribed or preordained by a theoretical model (even if that model is not a specific representation of reality but only a general research tool).<sup>165</sup>

Although I can appreciate these criticisms, they are not necessarily reasons to reject the idea that Jesus' culture was a group-centered one. As I will point out shortly, even those who are critical of the use of models still appreciate the group-centered nature of the culture of which Jesus was a part. Thus, although the methodological debate surrounding the use of models in anthropology and social sciences is an important one, I need not take a side in that debate for the purposes of this study. Rather, I only need to demonstrate that there is some level of agreement among those who use models and those who do not when it comes to the importance of the group for role and identity formation, something that I will attempt to do shortly.<sup>166</sup>

A more significant criticism might be that Malina and others have used too much anachronistic evidence in their research. Horrell notes that throughout Malina's work 'a number of the anthropological studies employed by Malina *et al.* are of the modern Mediterranean, and the implicit assumption that modern and ancient Mediterranean cultures are broadly continuous and similar may be sharply questioned.'<sup>167</sup> It is, indeed, the case that Malina utilizes evidence from modern cultures when researching and presenting findings about the ancient world.<sup>168</sup> However, when it comes to his conclusions concerning the dyadic nature of persons in Jesus' culture, he appears to me to utilize a fair amount of New Testament sources to support his claims.<sup>169</sup> One could, of

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<sup>165</sup> Louise J. Lawrence, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew* (WUNT 2.165; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 22. See also Horrell, 'Social-Scientific Interpretation', 19: 'But any particular model *shapes* the way in which evidence is selected and interpreted; theoretical questions about the nature of a model or research framework are therefore as crucial as the pragmatic question as to how well the data fit' (emphasis original).

<sup>166</sup> See pp. 40-41 below.

<sup>167</sup> David G. Horrell, 'Social Sciences Studying Formative Christian Phenomena: A Creative Movement', in *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches*, eds. Anthony J. Blasi, Jean Duhaime, Paul-André Turcotte (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002), 23. He goes on to say, 'To some extent the underlying issue and point of debate is a methodological one: Should a social-scientific approach involve the testing of generalised cross-cultural models or a more inductive, interpretive, particularist approach (see §6.2 above)?' (Ibid.).

<sup>168</sup> But other scholars, such as Lawrence, do this as well. See, e.g., Lawrence, 'Structure, Agency', 281; *Ethnography*, 250-252.

<sup>169</sup> See, e.g., Malina, *New Testament World*, 58-67.



course, challenge his interpretation of these passages and the extent to which he might be imposing his models onto the evidence. Yet, when I consider his work, I find that both the manner in which he utilizes these texts and the conclusions that follow are reasonable.

This leads me to the final criticism of Malina that I will discuss here, i.e., the claim that he overemphasizes the collectivistic nature of Jesus' culture. Lawrence suggests that when one stresses too much the collectivistic side of Jesus' culture, one might overlook 'the importance of individualistic self-understanding' that also exists in it.<sup>170</sup> Based on her own research, Lawrence finds that although 'an individual is expected to conform to traditional ways of behaving, that individual can still express a personality of his or her own and make individual choices', and that studies 'of primarily collectivistic culture have identified elements of individualism, even in specifically Mediterranean communities'.<sup>171</sup> Thus, she concludes, 'To imagine that whole cultures or societies may be classified in terms of mutually exclusive monolithic categories as either individualistic or collectivistic is simplistic and misreads the ethnographic and anthropological record'.<sup>172</sup>

I would agree that Malina's wording in the above quotes is quite strong and could at times use more nuance.<sup>173</sup> Yet, regardless of how much one wishes to emphasize the collectivistic nature of Jesus' culture, it seems to me that there is general agreement that for someone in Jesus' culture, the group was significant in the formation of an individual's identity and role, even if the individual's self-understanding was a part of this process as well. Lawrence, for example, although emphasizing individuality more than Malina, still states:

In summary, collectivist culture and the centrality of the family are to some extent confirmed in Matthew's world. Individualist traits should not be ignored because these, *even if to a lesser extent*, are also important. Rather than consider Mediterranean identity as dyadic, one needs another individual to know one's own identity, it is probably better

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<sup>170</sup> Louise Lawrence, 'Structure, Agency and Ideology: A Response to Zeba Crook', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29 (2007), 284, quoting her conclusions in *An Ethnography*, 259.

<sup>171</sup> Lawrence, *An Ethnography*, 249.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>173</sup> Crook contends that Lawrence is simply missing the nuance in Malina's findings and offers the sort of nuanced discussion of the dyadic personality and collectivism that Lawrence believes is missing in the work of Malina (see Crook, 'Structure versus Agency', 256-259, 264-270).

to refer to a polyadic personality, i.e. one needs a number of other people in order to situate oneself in the appropriate roles etc.<sup>174</sup>

Similarly, in another summary statement, she states that ‘while it is confirmed that the people populating Matthew’s world are certainly concerned with collectivist group identity and their relationships with others, this focus does not negate the importance of individualistic self-understanding’.<sup>175</sup> Thus, even if I were to reject the use of models and work only from the conclusions of someone like Lawrence regarding the collectivistic nature of Jesus’ culture, I would still find good reason to challenge the overwhelming focus on Jesus as an individual. For whether one’s understanding of Jesus’ culture is based on the methods and conclusions of someone like Malina or someone like Lawrence, focusing solely, or even primarily, on Jesus’ individual behavior would at best only get one half-way toward understanding whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure.<sup>176</sup>

A second reason to look beyond the individual Jesus is that, as I hope to demonstrate below, when one looks at the rise of royal figures and Davidic Messiahs throughout Israel’s history, one finds that it is the behavior of the group of which the individual was a part, rather than simply the behavior of the individual, that results in an individual becoming a Davidic messianic figure; in other words, the making of a royal figure or Davidic Messiah appears not to be the result of an individual pursuit, but was a group driven affair.<sup>177</sup> Therefore, focusing on Jesus alone is perhaps not the best way to go about answering the Davidic messianic question.

The third reason I consider the approach to the Davidic messianic question that focuses on Jesus’ words and deeds in isolation rather than in the context of his group to be problematic is that Jesus’ words and deeds alone are an extremely tentative basis on which to answer the Davidic messianic question, especially if, as I will argue shortly, a

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<sup>174</sup> Lawrence, *An Ethnography*, 249.

<sup>175</sup> Lawrence, *An Ethnography*, 259. She reiterates this in ‘Structure, Agency and Ideology’, 283-284.

<sup>176</sup> As I read through the scholarly literature in which this debate has taken place, I see an unfortunate instance of scholars talking past one another (this was most apparent to me in the exchange between Crook and Lawrence). Those who emphasize the group-oriented nature of persons do not appear to reject the notion that there still existed individuality, and those who wish to emphasize individuality among those in Jesus’ culture do not appear to deny that individuals’ identities and roles are still significantly influenced by others.

<sup>177</sup> See 3.3.1 below, where the making of royal and Davidic messianic figures is discussed in detail.

Davidic messianic figure would not have made any explicit verbal claims to that role. Even if there were agreement about the historicity of Jesus' words and deeds, the variety of possible interpretations of them is too great for them to be very useful in this debate. Simply for the sake of practicality, then, historical Jesus scholars should start to move away from looking at Jesus individually. In other words, just as the variety of portraits of the historical Jesus 'forces us back to questions of theory and method',<sup>178</sup> scholarship's inability to settle the Davidic messianic question by looking at the individual Jesus should, in my view, force one to look for a more solid basis on which to answer the Davidic messianic question; the individual Jesus simply will not do.

## **2.2 Verbal Claims and Self-Exaltation**

The trend among scholars of allowing the absence of a verbal claim to Davidic messiahship by Jesus and/or self-exaltation on his part to figure prominently in their work is likewise problematic. It presumes without any evidence at all that a verbal claim or self-exaltation is relevant to the Davidic messianic question, when, in fact, I would argue that the evidence demonstrates precisely the opposite. This becomes apparent as one considers the biblical texts that speak of Israel's past and future kings, the extra-biblical Jewish literature that contained Davidic Messianic expectations, and the historical Davidic messianic figures who were active around the time of Jesus.<sup>179</sup>

### **2.2.1 Israel's Past Kings**

There is no evidence that a verbal claim or self-exaltation figured in the rise of past biblical kings. Take, for example, the rise of Saul and David to royal status. Saul and David did not go about claiming kingship for themselves; instead, they were chosen to be king by God,<sup>180</sup> anointed king by the prophet Samuel,<sup>181</sup> and proclaimed king by

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<sup>178</sup> Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, xxviii.

<sup>179</sup> In what follows I will mainly offer citations of the relevant texts, but I will only briefly discuss some of these texts. The reason for this is to avoid redundancy and conserve space. I am attempting for the most part to demonstrate that something is not present in these texts, but quoting entire passages from all of the relevant texts in order to demonstrate this would simply take too much space; referring the reader to the relevant passages should suffice. In addition, it will be necessary for me to engage in greater detail with these same texts in greater detail later. Therefore, rather than discussing them in detail twice, a brief discussion of a few texts, with references to more in the footnotes, should be adequate for me to make my point here while still allowing for a detailed discussion later.

<sup>180</sup> 1 Sam. 9:15-17; 1 Sam. 16:1, 11-13.

the people.<sup>182</sup> That it is God who raises up the king, rather than the king claiming the title for himself, is stressed throughout these accounts. Of Saul, it is said, ‘The Lord has anointed you (הָלֹא כִּי־מָשַׁחְךָ יְהוָה) ruler over his people Israel’,<sup>183</sup> and ‘Do you see the one whom the Lord has chosen? (הֲוִדִי הַרְאִיתֶם אִשָּׁר בָּחַרְבּוֹ)’.<sup>184</sup> Of David, one reads that God told Samuel, ‘I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons (בְּנָיו לִי מֶלֶךְ־כִּירְאִיתִי ב)....The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one”’.<sup>185</sup> One finds clearly in these accounts that, as Roland de Vaux puts it with regard to kingship in general in ancient Israel, ‘ascension to the throne implies a divine choice: a man is “king by the grace of God”...his choice was exercised at each ascension’.<sup>186</sup> It is just as clear from the stories of Saul and David that they are not exalting themselves, but are instead exalting God. Consider the words spoken by Saul after his victory over the Ammonites: ‘No one shall be put to death this day, for today the Lord has brought deliverance to Israel (לֹא־יָשִׁיב עֲשֶׂה־יְהוָה תְּשׁוּעָה)’,<sup>187</sup> or David’s prayer after God makes a covenant with him,<sup>188</sup> or David’s song of thanksgiving and his last words in 2 Sam. 22.2-51 and 23.2-7.

<sup>181</sup> 1 Sam 10:1, 17-24; 1 Sam. 16:13. Interestingly, Saul was hiding from the crowd while Samuel was proclaiming him as king to the people. Hardly a verbal claim to kingship.

<sup>182</sup> 1 Sam. 10:24; 11:14-15; 2 Sam. 2:1-4; 2 Sam. 5:1-3. As David attempted to secure the loyalty of Jabesh-gilead, his claim to the throne comes in the form of an appeal to his anointing by the people: ‘Therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them’ (2 Sam. 2:7). This is an indication that once enthroned a king might then refer to himself as king, or, somewhat synonymously, as the Lord’s anointed (see also Ps. 18.50; 28.8; 72.1). This ‘claim’, however, is irrelevant to the point I am attempting to make currently. It would be odd to think that Jesus saw himself as enthroned already during his ministry. Interestingly, both Saul and David were reticent to talk about their being anointed as kings until they were, in fact, enthroned. Saul says nothing about it to his uncle after being questioned about what happened when he visited Samuel (1 Sam. 10:14-16), and David, although anointed by God and Samuel as the king, makes no move to acquire the throne until after Saul’s death.

<sup>183</sup> 1 Sam. 10:1.

<sup>184</sup> 1 Sam. 10:24. See also 1 Sam. 12:1, where Samuel states that he has, on God’s behalf, ‘listened to you in all that you have said to me, and have set a king over you (מֶלֶךְ־נָאֵמְלִיךְ עָלֵיכֶם)’.

<sup>185</sup> 1 Sam. 16:1-12.

<sup>186</sup> Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1967), 100. He continues this point, stating, ‘If the kingdom descended to Solomon and not to his elder brother Adonias, it was “because it came to him from Yahweh” (1 K 2:15; cf. 1 Ch 28:5)’. See also David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 298, who, commenting on 1 Sam. 10:24, writes, ‘Samuel emphasizes here the divine decision about Saul’s choice. His expression is *the Lord has chosen*, while in 12:13 it is said to the people “you have chosen”’.

<sup>187</sup> 1 Sam. 11.13.

<sup>188</sup> 2 Sam. 7.18-29.

All of this was not unique to Saul and David, as the numerous psalms that speak of Israel's kings, including those that shaped later messianic expectations, make clear. Take Psalm 2, for example. Despite the fact that the king plays an important role in this psalm, it should not be overlooked that God exalts the king and remains the central figure in the text. One reads in this psalm that kings and rulers have set themselves and taken counsel 'against the Lord and his anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us"'.<sup>189</sup> The psalm then continues:

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, 'I have set my king (נִאֲנִי נִסְכָּתִי) on Zion, my holy hill'. I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel'. Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear (עֲבַדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּיִרְאָה), with trembling kiss his feet, or he will be angry, and you will perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled. Happy are all who take refuge in him.<sup>190</sup>

The same is true of Ps. 89, which begins with numerous praises of God and goes on to state:

Then you [i.e., God] spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: 'I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people (שׁוֹנִיתִי עֶזְרָא) (עַל־גִּבּוֹר הַמְּרִיחִי בְּחֹזֶק מַעַם). I have found my servant David (מָצָאתִי דָוִד עַבְדִּי); with my holy oil I have anointed him (מִשְׁחָתִיו); my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted. I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. He shall cry to me, "You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation! (הוּא יְקָרְאֵנִי אָבִי אֱתֶה אֵלַי) (וְיִצּוֹר יְשׁוּעָתִי)" I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth (אֶרְאֵנִי) (אֶרְאֵנִי יְקָרְאֵנִי אָבִי אֱתֶה אֵלַי)'.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Ps. 2.1-3.

<sup>190</sup> Ps. 2.4-11. See also Ps. 132, especially vss. 11-18.

<sup>191</sup> Ps. 89.19-27. Commenting on these verses, Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (WBC 20; Waco: World Books, 1990), 422, writes, 'The first part (vv 20-28) sets forth in divine speech the status of David as the chosen and anointed servant of Yahweh. The status of David as the divinely empowered warrior, chosen from among the people, is emphasized (v 20b). Yahweh "found" him and anointed him to be his servant-king (v 21). "Found" (מָצָא) is used in the sense of "elect/chose", as in Hos 9:10; Deut 32:10; cf. Ezek 16:4-7, 7-8'. See also, Klaus Baltzer, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 409. This psalm was probably an enthronement psalm, applicable to any Davidic king (Fitzmyer, *One Who is to Come*, 21-22).

This biblical evidence suggests that verbal claims and self-exaltation were not relevant in the rise of Israel's past kings. To the contrary, it is God who established the king and who remained the exalted figure throughout their rise and reigns.<sup>192</sup>

### 2.2.2 The Future Davidic King

There also seems to be nothing about a verbal claim or self-exaltation figuring in the rise of the future Davidic king in the biblical texts that mention him, texts that would also come to shape Davidic messianic expectations.<sup>193</sup> Instead, it is God's raising up of that king, along with the actions of the future king, that are emphasized and that make his royal status recognizable, and it is God who remains the exalted figure throughout all of this. Jer. 23.1-8, for example, reads:

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord. Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord. The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּרִיתִי), and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.' Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the Lord lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt', but 'As the Lord lives who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them.' Then they shall live in their own land.<sup>194</sup>

In much the same way Ezekiel speaks of God establishing the future Davidic king: 'I [God] will set up (יָקִים) over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken'.<sup>195</sup> And like in Jeremiah, here in Ezekiel God remains the central and exalted figure:

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<sup>192</sup> See also Ps. 5.2 and 145.1, where the psalmist calls God his king, and psalms 10.16, 29.10, 44.4, 47.2, 68.24, 74.12, 95.3, 98.6, and 149.2, where God is called 'king'.

<sup>193</sup> See, e.g., 2 Sam. 7:11-17; Isa. 11:1-9; Jer. 23:5-6; 30:8-9; Ez. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Zech. 3:8; 9:9-10. Again, these texts will be discussed in more detail below.

<sup>194</sup> See also Jer. 30:8-9.

<sup>195</sup> Ez. 34:23-24.

I [God] myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice....I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep....I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their soil; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from the hands of those who enslaved them....You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, says the Lord God.<sup>196</sup>

There is nothing that I can discern in these texts that demonstrate to me that the future Davidic king was expected to verbally claim that role or exalt himself rather than God.

### 2.2.3 The Davidic Messiah

The extra-biblical literature that contains Davidic messianic expectations and the Davidic messianic figures that arose around the time of Jesus offer a similar picture. The Dead Sea Scrolls can only be mentioned very briefly here, as they most often simply mention the coming of the Davidic Messiah.<sup>197</sup> Where the Dead Sea Scrolls do mention the Davidic Messiah, I do not find any sort of expectation among them that the Davidic Messiah would claim the role for himself or engage in some sort of self-exaltation.<sup>198</sup>

Neither is such an expectation evident when one looks at Davidic messianic texts not among the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>199</sup> Rather, as in the biblical texts reviewed above, it is God's raising up of the king that is emphasized, and it is God who is exalted by the king. Consider, for example, the Psalms of Solomon.<sup>200</sup> This is a text best known for its seventeenth and eighteenth psalms, as it is these psalms that feature expectations for the Davidic Messiah. Before looking at these chapters, however, one should consider how

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<sup>196</sup> Ez. 34:15-31.

<sup>197</sup> See, e.g., 1QS 9:10-11; 1QSa 2:11-15, CD 12:23-13:1; 4Q174. Some texts will describe, only in very brief fragments, various expectations for him. See, e.g., 1QSa 2:11-15, 17-22; CD 7:15-21; 4Q246; 4Q285 Frag. 4, 5; 4Q521 (?).

<sup>198</sup> See, e.g., 1QS 9:10-11; 1QSa 2:11-15, 17-22; CD 7:15-21; 12:23; 12:23-13:1; 14:18-22; 19:7-11; 4Q174; 4Q285 frags. 4, 5. There are other texts that might also speak of the Davidic Messiah (e.g., 4Q521), but I have left them out of this footnote because there is significant debate about whether they do. Even if these other texts do speak of the Davidic Messiah, they do not affect my conclusions here.

<sup>199</sup> See, e.g., Pss. Sol. 17; 18; 4 Ezra 7:26-30; 12:31-34; 2 Bar. 29:1-3; 30:1; 39:7; 40:1; 70:9; 72:2.

<sup>200</sup> All translations of the Psalms of Solomon are from Robert Wright's *The Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

God is portrayed in other portions of this text. God is clearly seen as the true king, the one who elevates the psalmist, kings generally, and Israel as a whole. God is ‘himself is king over the heavens, he who judges kings and rulers. He is the one who raises me up into glory (ὁ ἀνιστῶν ἐμὲ εἰς δόξαν), and who brings the arrogant to sleep.’<sup>201</sup> God is ‘a great and righteous king (μέγας βασιλεὺς καὶ δίκαιος); judging what is under heaven’.<sup>202</sup> In the fifth psalm one reads, ‘You feed kings and rulers and their subjects, O God, and who is the hope of the poor and the needy, if not you, O Lord?’, and the psalm ends by declaring, ‘Praised be the glory of the Lord because he himself is our king (ὅτι αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς ἡμῶν)’.<sup>203</sup> Thus, these verses make it clear that God is without a doubt Israel’s king.

When one finally turns one’s attention to the psalms that are specifically about the Davidic Messiah, God remains the king and the central focus of the messianic drama. In fact, Pss. Sol. 17 begins with these words: ‘O Lord, you yourself are our king for ever and ever (Κύριε σὺ αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς ἡμῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα), because in you, O God, we will take pride’. The psalm continues to focus on God’s judgment and God’s redemption of Israel, and only then does attention turn to the Davidic Messiah. This section of the psalm is worth quoting at length:

Look, O Lord, and *raise up for them their king, a son of David* (ἰδέ κύριε· καὶ ἀνάστησον αὐτοῖς τὸν βασιλέα αὐτῶν· υἱὸν Δαυὶδ·), to rule over your servant Israel in the time that you know, O God. *Ungird him with the strength* (καὶ ὑπόζωσον αὐτὸν ἰσχὺν) to destroy the unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem from the Gentiles who trample her down to destruction; In wisdom and in righteousness to drive out the sinners from the inheritance; to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter’s jar; to demolish all their resources with an iron rod; to destroy the lawbreaking Gentiles with the word of his mouth; to scatter the Gentiles from his presence at his threat; to condemn sinners by their own consciences. He will gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness, and he will judge the tribes of the people who have been made holy by the Lord his God. He will not tolerate unrighteousness to dwell among them again, and no person who knows evil will live with them. For he will know them, because they are all children of their God. He will distribute them upon the land according to their tribes. The stranger and the foreigner will no longer live with them. He will judge peoples and nations in the wisdom of justice. He will have Gentile peoples serving him under his yoke, and *he will glorify the Lord publically in the whole world* (καὶ τὸν κύριον δοξάσει ἐν ἐπισήμῳ πάσης τῆς γῆς). He will pronounce Jerusalem clean, consecrating it as it was in the

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<sup>201</sup> Pss. Sol. 2.30-31.

<sup>202</sup> Pss. Sol. 2.32.

<sup>203</sup> Pss. Sol. 5.11, 19. For God as judge see Pss. Sol. 8 and 9.



beginning. He will have nations come from the ends of the earth to see his glory....He will be a righteous king over them, taught by God, there will be no unrighteousness among them during his reign, because everyone will be holy, and their king will be the Lord Messiah. For he will not depend on cavalry and archers; Nor will he need to finance a war; He will not place his hope on making war. *The Lord himself is his king* (κύριος αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς αὐτοῦ), the hope of the one who hopes in God. He will be merciful to all the Gentiles that fearfully stand before him....*And he will not weaken during his reign, relying upon his God* (καὶ οὐκ ἀσθενήσῃ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ θεῷ αὐτοῦ), *because God will make him powerful* (ὅτι ὁ θεὸς κατειργάσατο αὐτὸν δυνατόν) by a holy spirit; and wise in intelligent counsel, with strength and righteousness. And the blessings of the Lord will be with him in strength, and it will not weaken; *His hope will be in the Lord* (ἡ ἐλπίς αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ κύριον). Then who can be stronger than he? He will be mighty in his actions and strong in the fear of God....This is the magnificence of the king of Israel that God acknowledged, *to raise him over the House of Israel* (ἀναστῆσαι αὐτὸν ἐπ’ οἶκον Ἰσραὴλ) to discipline it....Happy are the people born in those days who will see the good fortune of Israel that *God will cause* (ποιήσῃ ὁ θεός) in the gathering of the tribes. May God hasten his mercy to Israel; May he shield us from the contamination of defiled enemies; *The Lord himself is our king forevermore* (κύριος αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς ἡμῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ ἔτι).<sup>204</sup>

As I read this psalm, I find no indication that the Davidic Messiah was expected to verbally claim the role or exalt himself. Instead, the Davidic Messiah is pictured as one whom God will raise up and exalt, and who will himself exalt God.

Even in the extra-biblical texts that contain expectations of a more exalted version of the Davidic Messiah, or perhaps not even a Davidic Messiah necessarily but rather a heavenly messiah with Davidic traits, it is still God who is raising up and exalting this figure, rather than the figure verbally claiming his status or exalting himself. In 1 Enoch one finds perhaps the most exalted of the (Davidic?) messianic figures, and yet, it is not this figure who exalts himself, but rather God who is exalting the figure. 1 Enoch 45.4-6, for example, states: ‘I [God] shall cause my Elect One to dwell among them, I shall transform heaven and make it a blessing of light forever. I shall (also) transform the earth and make it a blessing, and cause my Elect One to dwell

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<sup>204</sup> Pss. Sol. 17.21-46. Kenneth Atkinson’s comments in *An Intertextual Study of the Psalms of Solomon* (SBEC 49; Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001) are worth noting: ‘The messiah, in addition to being a warrior, also had been commissioned as God’s agent and had been authorized to act and speak on behalf of the Lord. Although the messiah would possess an army he would not seek the throne for himself, for the psalmist stated that the Lord himself is his (= the messiah) king (PsSol 17:34)’ (349); ‘This Davidic messiah would recognize that God was even the Davidic messiah’s king and that the Davidic messiah only ruled on behalf of God (PsSol 17:34)’ (357).

in her'.<sup>205</sup> Likewise, in 61:8-13 one reads that God 'placed the Elect One on the throne of glory'<sup>206</sup> and that the Elect One and others, including heavenly figures, will go on to praise God.<sup>207</sup>

The (heavenly/Davidic) Messiah of 4 Ezra likewise makes no verbal claim or self-exaltation, but is revealed by God, who is the central and exalted figure of the text. In 4 Ezra 7.26-28 one reads:

For behold, the time will come, when the signs which I have foretold to you will come to pass; the city which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden shall be disclosed. And everyone who has been delivered from the evils that I have foretold shall see my wonders. For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years.<sup>208</sup>

And let one not forget that the text does not end here. It goes on to say:

And after these years my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath. And the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginning; so that no one shall be left. And after seven days the world, which is not yet awake, shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish. And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it; and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them. And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgment, and compassion shall pass away, and patience shall be withdrawn; but judgment alone shall remain, truth shall stand, and faithfulness shall grow strong. And recompense shall follow, and the reward shall be manifested; righteous deeds shall awake, and unrighteous deeds shall not sleep. Then the pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of Hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the Paradise of delight. Then the Most High will say to the nations that have been raised from the dead, 'Look now, and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised! Look on this side and

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<sup>205</sup> See also 1 Enoch 46:3; 48:1-8; 49:2-4. All translations from 1 Enoch are by Ephraim Isaac and are found in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 1, Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983).

<sup>206</sup> 'This is the first of two passages that describe the Lord of Spirits seating the Chosen One on the throne of (his) glory (62:2)' (George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37-82*, ed. Klaus Baltzer [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012]).

<sup>207</sup> See Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch*, 251-253.

<sup>208</sup> All 4 Ezra translations are by Bruce M. Metzger and are found in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 1, Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1983). See also 4 Ezra 12.31-34: 'And as for the lion that you saw rousing up out of the forest and roaring and speaking to the eagle and reproving him for his unrighteousness, and as for all his words that you have heard, this is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David, and will come and speak to them; he will denounce them for their ungodliness and for their wickedness, and will cast up before them their contemptuous dealings. For first he will set them living before his judgment seat, and when he has reproved them, then he will destroy them. But he will deliver in mercy the remnant of my people, those who have been saved throughout my borders, and he will make them joyful until the end comes, the day of judgment, of which I spoke to you at the beginning.'

on that; here are delight and rest, and there are fire and torments!’ Thus will he speak to them on the day of judgment – a day that has no sun or moon or stars, or cloud or thunder or lightning or wind or water or air, or darkness or evening or morning, or summer or spring or heat or winter or frost or cold or hail or rain or dew, or noon or night, or dawn or shining or brightness or light, but only the splendor of the glory of the Most High, by which all shall see what has been determined for them. For it will last for about a week of years. This is my judgment and its prescribed order; and to you alone have I shown these things.<sup>209</sup>

Although the Davidic Messiah is clearly present in 4 Ezra, it is God who reveals him, it is God who exalts him, and it is God who is the exalted, central figure of the text.

#### 2.2.4 Historical Davidic Messianic Figures

As one looks at the historical Davidic messianic figures who arose around the time of Jesus, one finds that they made no verbal claims to the title, nor were they exalting themselves.<sup>210</sup> This is especially interesting given that Josephus has an aversion to such messianic figures and often portrays them in a negative light.<sup>211</sup> Not unexpectedly, then, Josephus describes these Davidic Messiahs as acting presumptuously, but he does not tell the reader that they made a verbal claim or self-exaltation; instead, it was the respective Davidic Messiah’s followers who did these things.<sup>212</sup> Thus, although their actions played a significant role in their rise to Davidic messianic status, it seems that a verbal claim and/or self-exaltation played no part in the process.

#### 2.2.5 The Synoptics

Before concluding this section on verbal claims and self-exaltation, it is worthwhile also to draw attention to the Synoptic Gospels. These are documents that have been written explicitly to portray Jesus as the (at least Davidic) Messiah. However,

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<sup>209</sup> 4 Ezra 7:29-44.

<sup>210</sup> The accounts of these figures can be found in Josephus. For Simon of Perea, see *Jewish Antiquities* 17.273-277; *Jewish War* 2.57-59. For Athronges, see *Ant.* 17.278-284; *J.W.* 2.60-65. For Menahem, see *J.W.* 2.433-448. For Simon bar Giora, see primarily *J.W.* 4.507-513, 529-534; 7.26-36, 153-157. See 3.3.1 and 3.4.1 (*Historical Davidic Messianic Figures*) below for a more detailed discussion of these figures. Because I must discuss these figures in some detail on two more occasions below, I have chosen not to discuss them at length here so as to avoid repetitious discussion. Moreover, for quotations of these passages to be relevant, i.e., to show that they did not claim their Davidic messianic status, I would be required to quote all of these passages in their entirety, which, in my opinion, would be unnecessary. Simply citing the passages for the reader should suffice.

<sup>211</sup> See, e.g., Richard A. Horsley, ‘Popular Messianic Movements Around the Time of Jesus’, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984), 473-474, 485, 488-489.

<sup>212</sup> See, e.g., *Ant.* 17.274 (Simon of Perea); *Ant.* 17.281 (Athronges).

the authors of the Synoptics provide few, if any, stories in which Jesus verbally claims to be the (Davidic) Messiah. Take Mark, for example. There are only two instances in this Gospel where Jesus verbally affirms his messiahship. The first, found in Mark 9:41, is not so much a verbal claim to messiahship as it is an implicit recognition of his own messianic status, a status that the narrative implies was established by others. In Mark 9:41, Jesus says, ‘For should someone give you a cup of water to drink because you are in the name of Christ (ἐν ὀνόματι ὅτι Χριστοῦ ἐστε), truly I tell you that he will by no means lose his reward’.<sup>213</sup> The second, found in Mark 14:61-62, reads as follows: ‘Again the high priest was asking and saying to him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One (Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ;)?” And Jesus said, “I am (Εγὼ εἰμι); and You will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven”’. Notice that although Jesus answers the Priest’s question, ‘Are you the Messiah?’, with ‘I am’, he then goes on to speak of himself as ‘the son of man’, which might introduce some sort of ambiguity into his response.<sup>214</sup>

The situation is essentially the same in Matthew and Luke. Matthew 23:10 has Jesus saying, ‘Nor should you be called instructors, for one is your instructor, the Messiah (ὁ Χριστός)’, which appears to be an implicit recognition on the part Jesus that he is ‘the Messiah’, but a claim to messiahship is not the point of the story. When it comes to the scene of Jesus’ trial, one might argue that Matthew and Luke are even more ambiguous than Mark. For, whereas Mark has Jesus answer the high priest’s question with the words ‘I am’, Matthew and Luke have Jesus say, respectively, ‘You said (Σὺ εἶπας)’ and ‘you are saying that I am (Ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι)’.<sup>215</sup> This is it for the Synoptics; these are the only places where I can find Jesus (perhaps) making something like a verbal Davidic messianic claim. This is hardly compelling evidence that a verbal

<sup>213</sup> Translations from the Gospels will be my own and are based on the Greek text of Barbara Aland, et. al., *The Greek New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (Deutsche Biblegesellschaft/United Bible Societies; Stuttgart: 1998).

<sup>214</sup> One should note also the textual variant that has Jesus answering with ‘You say that I am (Σὺ εἶπας ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι)’ (see O’Neill, *Who Did Jesus*, 119; Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 27a; New York: Doubleday, 2000], 1005-1006).

<sup>215</sup> Matt. 26.64; Lk. 22.67-71. In Luke’s account, Jesus initially answers the question by saying, ‘If I should tell you, you would not believe (Εὰν ὑμῖν εἰπῶ οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε)’ before later answering the question ‘are you therefore the son of God? (Σὺ οὖν εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ;)’ with ‘you are saying that I am (Ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι)’.

claim was important for a Davidic Messiah. In fact, just the opposite seems to be true, i.e., it seems that for those who were intent on portraying Jesus' (at least Davidic) messiahship, a verbal claim to that role was virtually insignificant.

### **2.2.6 The Irrelevance of a Verbal Claim and/or Self-Exaltation**

As I review the evidence presented above, I find nothing that should lead me to believe that a Davidic messianic figure would have, or would have been expected to, verbally claimed that role or exalted himself. This means, therefore, that the absence of a verbal claim and/or self-exaltation is entirely irrelevant to the Davidic messianic question; it simply does not matter that Jesus did not claim this role or exalt himself. I therefore cannot help but to conclude that it has been a serious mistake for scholars to have allowed the absence of a verbal claim or self-exaltation by Jesus to figure prominently in their answers to the Davidic messianic question.<sup>216</sup>

### **2.3 The Non-militant Jesus and Category Mixing**

The third and final trend in scholarship also deserves to be challenged. There certainly appears to be a relatively widespread belief in the Judaism(s) of Jesus' day that a central role for the Davidic Messiah would be the redemption of Israel by means of an earthly military battle with Israel's enemies.<sup>217</sup> However, the evidence makes it just as apparent that there was a significant degree of category mixing occurring in Jewish messianic and eschatological speculation; one finds a diverse spectrum of figures, both literary and historical, that can only be described as a mix of various priestly, kingly, prophetic, and heavenly roles, and this mixing of roles itself took place in the context of the broader and variegated eschatological speculation of the time. There was thus a wide

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<sup>216</sup> Similarly, Charlesworth, 'From Messianology to Christology', 13, writes, 'A major question continues to be raised but answered unsatisfactorily: If Jesus thought he was the Messiah, would he not have made that claim explicit? The common *and mistaken* answer is yes. In reality the answer is probably no. Jesus probably would not have proclaimed himself to be the Messiah if he had conceived himself to be the Messiah. According to some early Jewish texts, like the Psalms of Solomon 17 (and perhaps 18), only God knows the time and identity of the Messiah, and according to many other texts God is keeping the Messiah in a secret place (see 4Ezra 7:28-29, 12:31-34, 13:26; 2Bar 30:1-2; cf. OdesSol 41:15)' (my emphasis; cf. O'Neill, *Who Did Jesus*, 42-54). See also Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum*, 545, who state, 'Der χριστὸς θεοῦ ist der von Gott Gesalbte. Man konnte sich, auch wenn man sich in diese eschatologische Funktion berufen wusste, nicht selbst als >>Gesalbter<< offenbaren und proklamieren. Der Anspruch: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ χριστὸς findet sich nur bei falschen Messiasen in der Zeit der letzten Prüfung. Diese Offenbarung des >>Messias<< musste vielmehr durch Gott geschehen'.

<sup>217</sup> See the texts and discussion in 3.4.1 below.

range of views concerning how the redemption of Israel will be initiated and enacted and who would be involved, with options ranging from it being carried out by a human figure, to it being brought about by a heavenly figure, or even simply God with no other prominent figure involved in it.

Probably the most relevant example of the sort of category mixing that I have in mind may be found in 1 Enoch 37-71. In this text, one finds traditional royal Davidic messianic attributes being shifted to a heavenly messianic figure that is likely not to be seen strictly as a Davidic Messiah. In 1 Enoch 48:10, for example, one reads that the ‘kings of the earth’ will be judged because ‘they have denied the Lord of Spirits and his Anointed one’. This appears to be a rather clear allusion to Psalm 2:2, a royal psalm about a Davidic king, which states that ‘the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed’.<sup>218</sup> In 1 Enoch 49:2-4 one reads that in the Elect One ‘dwells the spirit of wisdom, the spirit which gives thoughtfulness, the spirit of knowledge and strength, and the spirit of those who have fallen asleep in righteousness’, which is ‘an almost verbatim quotation of the Davidic oracle in Isa 11:2’.<sup>219</sup> Further along in 1 Enoch 52:4, it is stated, ‘All these things that you have seen will be for the authority of his Anointed One, so that he may be powerful and mighty on the earth’. The ‘authority’ of the messianic figure in this verse ‘fits well the kingly title, Anointed One, and the reference to “the earth” is reminiscent of the sovereignty of “his Anointed One” over “the ends of the earth” and the “rulers of the earth” in Ps 2:8, 10’.<sup>220</sup> Finally, 1 Enoch 62:2 has another echo of the Davidic oracle in Isa. 11:<sup>221</sup> ‘And the Lord of Spirits seated him upon the throne of his glory; and the spirit of righteousness was poured upon him. And the word of his mouth will slay all the sinners, and all the unrighteous will perish from his presence’. However, the messianic figure of 1 Enoch 37-71 ‘is not a Davidic messiah in any conventional sense. He does not establish a kingdom on earth. Rather, some attributes traditionally associated with

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<sup>218</sup> On this and other royal psalms see 3.4.1 below.

<sup>219</sup> Nickelsburg and Vanderkam, *1 Enoch*, 178.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 189. Fitzmyer believes that the Anointed One of 1 Enoch 48:10 and 52:4 ‘is almost certainly kingly or royal’ (*One to Come*, 88).

<sup>221</sup> See Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 182; Nickelsburg and Vanderkam, *1 Enoch*, 262-263. More will be said on this and other prophetic oracles in 3.4.1 below.

the Davidic messiah are here transferred to a heavenly savior figure'.<sup>222</sup> There is thus clearly a significant level of category mixing going on in this text.

There are two similar examples of category mixing found in the careers of historical figures that arose around the time of Jesus. The first is that of Simon bar Giora. As I will observe below, Simon at one point went about 'proclaim[ing] liberty to those in slavery, and a reward to those already free'.<sup>223</sup> This recalls Isa. 61:1, where one reads of a prophetic figure, 'he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners'. As I will observe below, Simon was acting in the role of the Davidic Messiah,<sup>224</sup> and yet, here he is acting in a manner that appears to be more closely associated with a prophetic role. I will note later that the same sort of prophetic-royal category mixing that I believe is noticeable in the career of Simon is also present in 4Q521.<sup>225</sup>

The second example is found in the career of the (messianic) prophet known as the Egyptian. As Josephus tells it:

A still worse blow was dealt at the Jews by the Egyptian false prophet. A charlatan, who had gained for himself the reputation of a prophet, this man appeared in the country, collected a following of about thirty thousand dupes, and led them by a circuitous route from the desert to the mount called the mount of Olives. From there he proposed to force an entrance into Jerusalem and, after overpowering the Roman garrison, to set himself up as tyrant of the people (τοῦ δήμου τυραννεῖν), employing those who poured in with him as his bodyguard. His attack was anticipated by Felix, who went to meet him with the Roman heavy infantry, the whole population joining him in the defence. The outcome of the ensuing engagement was that the Egyptian escaped with a few of his

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<sup>222</sup> Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 182. Later, commenting on the concept of the son of man in relation to the hope for the Davidic Messiah, Collins states: 'What we find in the writings of the first century CE, however, is a tendency to combine traditions about a Davidic messiah with the expectation of a heavenly savior figure. *There was, then, some flexibility in the use of messianic traditions in this period....* Danielic imagery could be applied to the Davidic messiah to give him a more heavenly, transcendent character than is apparent in other sources. In short, "Davidic messiah" and "Son of Man" were not mutually exclusive concepts. Each involves a cluster of motifs, which could be made to overlap. Rather than two types, we should think of a spectrum of messianic expectation, ranging from the earthly messiah of the *Psalms of Solomon* and several Dead Sea Scrolls, through the transcendent messiah of *4 Ezra* to the heavenly figure of the *Similitudes of Enoch*' (*Scepter and Star*, 189, my emphasis).

<sup>223</sup> *J.W.* 4.508. For more on Simon and other historical Davidic messianic figures, see 3.3.1 and 3.4.1 (*Historical Davidic Messianic Figures*) below.

<sup>224</sup> At the very least, he was acting in a royal role.

<sup>225</sup> See pp. 84-85 below.

followers; most of his force were killed or taken prisoners; the remainder dispersed and stealthily escaped to their several homes.<sup>226</sup>

According to Josephus's account, it appears that the Egyptian intended to assume a royal-like role.<sup>227</sup> One should not be too skeptical about this claim by Josephus, as is Collins.<sup>228</sup> Instead, what one appears to find here is quite similar to what one finds in the career of Simon bar Giora, i.e., an ambiguity with regard to a figure being a prophet or king. However, rather than a royal pretender acting in the mold of a prophet, a prophetic figure has here taken on a traditionally royal role.<sup>229</sup>

In these three instances alone one may observe a multi-directional mix of Davidic, heavenly, and prophetic roles. A heavenly figure is given a traditionally royal Davidic role; a Davidic Messiah takes on a prophetic role; and a prophetic figure takes on a royal role. Add to these examples the instances of priestly figures taking on royal roles,<sup>230</sup> king David being known as a prophet in the Dead Sea Scrolls,<sup>231</sup> and the

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<sup>226</sup> *J.W.* 2.261-263. Translation by H. St. J. Thackeray from The Loeb Classical Library edition. All translations of Josephus will be from the LCL. Henceforth, I will simply note the translator alone for extended quotations.

<sup>227</sup> *J.W.* 2.262. Hengel translates the line 'after overpowering the Roman garrison, to set himself up as tyrant of the people' in this way: 'to overcome the Roman occupation troops in Jerusalem and to assume the rule over the people' (*The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989], 231).

<sup>228</sup> Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 197. Interestingly, Collins sees 4Q521 as speaking of a prophetic messiah. However, as I suggest below, there certainly appears to be some royal traits assigned to the figure in this text. In fact, some argue that in this text one finds a more prophetically styled royal Davidic messiah (see note 336 below). Thus, if one does believe that 4Q521 speaks of a prophet, then that itself provides evidence that a messianic prophet could take on some royal traits, which is exactly what seems to be happening with the Egyptian.

<sup>229</sup> Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 136-137, writes, 'Though the sign prophet and the popular king, or messiah, thus represent distinct types, *they overlap to some extent* in the person of the Egyptian. He claimed to be a prophet and promised a miracle as did the other sign prophets; unlike the others, however, he also commanded an armed band of followers and declared his intention to "set himself up as ruler of the people" (τοῦ δήμου τυραννεῖν, *War* 2.262)' (my emphasis). See also P. W. Barnett, 'The Jewish Sign Prophets, A.D. 40-70: Their Intentions and Origin', *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981), 683, who observes, 'Unlike the other Sign Prophets the Egyptian prophet portrayed himself as the fulfilment of the "sign". Thus, after overpowering the Roman garrison, he would "set himself up as tyrant of the people" (τοῦ δήμου τυραννεῖν). Thus, the Egyptian is both a "prophet" and also a "king" and as such unique among the Sign Prophets'.

<sup>230</sup> Note how much overlap there is between the role of the kings described in Sirach 48.17-49.16 and Simon the high priest in Sirach 50, particularly between Sirach 48.17-22; 49.11-13 and Sirach 50.1-4. Also note how various leaders of the Maccabean family appear to have acted like kings. This is apparent in 1 Macc. 3.1-9, which reads almost like a description of the Davidic Messiah of the Psalms of Solomon; 1 Macc. 4.60-61; 9.19-22; 10.10-24; 14.4-15; 2 Macc. 8.21-29 (cf. Athronges's actions as a royal leader).



explicit claim of at least one of the Hasmoneans, John Hyrcanus I, to be king, priest, and prophet,<sup>232</sup> and there is more than enough evidence to conclude that messianic and eschatological roles were not as clear-cut as they might at first appear.<sup>233</sup>

It is also important to note that in addition to the mixing of roles, there were a variety of eschatological scenarios being contemplated in Jesus' day. In the Davidic messianic expectations that I will review below, the expectation that there would be a human figure leading the eschatological battle for the redemption of Israel comes through quite clearly.<sup>234</sup> However, other texts and movements make it just as clear that this was not the only eschatological scenario available. In 1 Enoch one finds a heavenly figure heavily involved in the eschaton. In the prophetic movements that arose in the first half of the first century, one finds an emphasis on God's involvement in the eschaton. The prophetic figure Theudas, for example, envisioned the redemption of Israel as coming from heaven rather than from earth,<sup>235</sup> and many scholars believe, though I do not, that John the Baptist did not announce the coming of an earthly figure who would redeem Israel, but rather a heavenly figure, perhaps even God alone.<sup>236</sup> Even in the case of the Egyptian prophet, who I argued above had royal ambitions, it is not clear, despite Josephus's portrayal of him in *Jewish War*, that he acted strictly as an earthly military leader. Rather, much like Theudas, he seems to have anticipated that significant, and possibly solely, divine action would be involved in the redemption of Israel and the destruction of its enemies. Consider how Josephus's account in *Antiquities* portrays the Egyptian:

At this time there came to Jerusalem from Egypt a man who declared that he was a prophet and advised the masses of the common people to go out with him to the mountain called the Mount of Olives, which lies opposite the city at a distance of five

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<sup>231</sup> See Peter W. Flint, 'The Prophet David at Qumran', in *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran*, ed. Matthias Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 158-167; Yuzuru Miura, *David in Luke-Acts: His Portrayal in Light of Early Judaism* (WUNT 2.232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 81-84.

<sup>232</sup> See *J.W.* 1.68; *Ant.* 13.299-300.

<sup>233</sup> Is not this always the case when modern academics attempt to fit ancient peoples and their ideas into neat categories?

<sup>234</sup> See 3.4.1 below.

<sup>235</sup> See Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 166-167; Gray, *Prophetic Figure*, 113, 114-116, 137-138. For the account of Theudas, see *Ant.* 20.97-98.

<sup>236</sup> See 5.8 and 5.8.2 below.

furlongs. For he asserted that he wished to demonstrate from there that at his command Jerusalem's walls would fall down, through which he promised to provide them an entrance into the city. When Felix heard of this he ordered his soldiers to take up their arms. Setting out from Jerusalem with a large force of cavalry and infantry, he fell upon the Egyptian and his followers, slaying four hundred of them and taking two hundred prisoners. The Egyptian himself escaped from the battle and disappeared.<sup>237</sup>

The Egyptian thus seems not only to have mixed roles, but he also appears to have mixed eschatological scenarios; he would rule over Israel, but it was God who destroy Israel's enemies and bring about the redemption.<sup>238</sup> Finally, it should be noted that there were scenarios that appear not to have involved any other prominent figure in the eschaton but God.<sup>239</sup>

All of this suggests to me that Jesus' lack of earthly military ambitions cannot at all be equated with a rejection of the Davidic messianic role, nor should it lead one who is otherwise inclined to conclude that Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure hesitant to do so. This is particularly so if, as some have argued, Jesus anticipated that the eschatological redemption of Israel and judgment of Israel's enemies would be initiated from heaven.<sup>240</sup> It could be the case, for example, that Jesus took up the role of the eschatological king, i.e., the Davidic Messiah, which would include some sort of role in the redemption of Israel and judgment of its enemies, but believed that this redemption and judgment would come from heaven rather than from earth and that his role in it would be entirely a passive one.<sup>241</sup> This should not be viewed as a rejection of the

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<sup>237</sup> *Ant.* 20.169-172, trans. Louis H. Feldman.

<sup>238</sup> Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 137-138, writes, 'It may be said with a fair degree of confidence that the sign prophets announced to their followers that God was about to act to deliver them. It is extremely difficult, however, to fill in this general statement with any particular content....One thing, however, is reasonably certain: the sign prophets believed that the deliverance they expected and announced would be wrought miraculously by God; it would not be achieved through their own efforts alone. On this point, as on others, there are differences in the relative importance attached to divine intervention and human effort. The Egyptian thought that God would cause the walls of Jerusalem to fall down, but expected that he and his army would take over from there'.

<sup>239</sup> See, e.g., Morton Smith, 'What Is Implied by the Variety of Messianic Figures?', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78 (1959), 68; William Horbury, *Messianism Among Jews and Christians: Twelve Biblical and Historical Studies* (London: T&T Clark), 38-39; James H. Charlesworth, "The Concept of the Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha," *ANRW* II.19.1 (1979), 218; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 537.

<sup>240</sup> See, e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 61-119; Dale C. Allison, 'The Problem of Gehenna', in *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 56-110; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 420-425.

<sup>241</sup> Gray's comments, *Prophetic Figures*, 138-139, on the distinction between sign prophets and what I call historical Davidic messianic figures are worth considering here. She notes that 'the distinction between

Davidic messianic role, nor should it be seen as a perplexing or unique scenario.<sup>242</sup> It is instead, to my mind at least, a perfectly acceptable and plausible mixing of eschatological and messianic expectations.

## **2.4 The Need for a New Way Forward**

When I consider the trends that have characterized recent research on the Davidic messianic question, I find them to be significantly problematic. The focus on Jesus as an individual, particularly as an individual standing outside of his group, the prominent role played by the absence of self-exaltation or a verbal claim to the Davidic messianic role, emphasizing Jesus' lack of earthly military ambitions, all of this offers little to help one trying to determine whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure. Yet, because it is just this question that I wish to pursue in this study, the most important task that faces me now is to propose in place of these trends a fresh approach to the Davidic messianic question, one that is hopefully better suited for the task.

## **Chapter 3**

### ***Charting a New Course***

#### **3.1 Justifying My Fresh Approach**

In the previous chapter I suggested that recent research on the Davidic messianic question has been problematic largely because it offered no solid basis on which to answer the question; the things that scholars have been focusing on and looking for are

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sign prophets and political revolutionaries [i.e., Davidic messianic figures], then, does not concern their attitude to Roman rule, but rather their practical tactics and degree of realism, that is, the extent to which they thought it necessary to take into account the realities of the political and military situation in Palestine in their day. It should be emphasized that the distinction between the two types of figures in this respect is not an absolute one: the armed revolutionaries believed that God would fight on their behalf and that victory was impossible without his assistance. But unlike the sign prophets, they also believed that a full and considered military effort was necessary on their part. By the standards of the modern world, which does not put much stock in miraculous divine intervention, the rebels were more realistic in their strategy of opposition to Roman rule than were the sign prophets'. She also says, 'The Egyptian clearly represents a borderline case in which sign prophet is beginning to merge into political revolutionary' (Ibid., 139). It seems to me to be perfectly acceptable to view Jesus as such a 'borderline case', only in the opposite direction; that is, he is a Davidic messianic figure who is closer to a sign prophet in his view of how the redemption of Israel would take place (i.e., through divine intervention) and to what extent he would, or would not, be involved in an earthly battle aimed at it (i.e., he would have a passive role in it).

<sup>242</sup> As illustrated above, this was the sort of scenario that Strauss believed Jesus anticipated.

either irrelevant to the question (e.g., a verbal claim and self-proclamation) or unhelpful to one attempting to answer it (e.g., the individual Jesus and his earthly military ambitions). I concluded the chapter by suggesting that a fresh approach is needed, and I would like now to offer an approach that I believe fulfills this need.

As I stated in the introduction, the approach that I am taking in this study is one which focuses on the Twelve's view of Jesus and Jesus' own behavior in light of that view, i.e., I am focusing on the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve. More specifically, I am looking for indications that the Twelve viewed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah and that he acted in ways that were consistent with this view.<sup>243</sup> My task presently, therefore, is to demonstrate to the reader why it is both relevant and valuable to approach the Davidic messianic question in this way.

### **3.2 The Twelve's View of Jesus**

Above I drew attention to the dyadic personality in order to illustrate why focusing on Jesus the individual might not be entirely helpful for one confronting the Davidic messianic question. Here I draw attention to it again in order to illustrate the relevance and value of focusing attention on how the Twelve viewed Jesus.

In addition to the findings of Malina and Neyrey about the dyadic personality that have been quoted and referenced above, there are some comments in their essay 'First-Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individual' that are noteworthy as well. In this essay, Malina and Neyrey draw attention to particular traditions in Luke in which Jesus is portrayed as a dyadic personality.<sup>244</sup> They note that in these traditions, 'Jesus is always told "who he is"; he does not decide his own identity or role', and as a particularly clear example of this, they draw attention to Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi.<sup>245</sup> Commenting on this tradition, Malina and Neyrey state that Jesus 'is not playing a game with [the disciples] and he is not being coy when he first asks, "Who do the people say that I am?" (9:19) and then, "But who do you say that I am?" (9:20)'.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Once again I should remind the reader that I will not be attempting to determine what Jesus intended with his behavior. His self-understanding will not be discussed in this study.

<sup>244</sup> It should be mentioned that Malina and Neyrey are not drawing historical conclusions here, but rather simply examining these traditions in the course of discussing the dyadic personality.

<sup>245</sup> Malina and Neyrey, 'First-Century Personality', 84.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

Rather, because ‘dyadic persons need constantly to be told their role, identity, and status by those around them’, Jesus ‘listens to what significant others around him say about him’, instead of ‘individualistically’ determining his own identity and role.<sup>247</sup> If, therefore, Jesus was a dyadic personality, as is likely the case, then knowing how significant others like the Twelve viewed him is essential for answering the Davidic messianic question, as it is these significant others’ view that would likely have been a determining factor when it came to the role that Jesus took up.<sup>248</sup>

Even if one wishes to leave aside the findings concerning the dyadic personality, knowing how the Twelve viewed Jesus remains extremely valuable. In order to demonstrate why this is, I would like to draw attention to how Vermes opted to explain why Jesus’ disciples viewed him as the Davidic Messiah during and after his ministry. He reasons as follows:

Taking into consideration the spirit of first-century AD Palestine, with its eschatological, political and revolutionary ferment, it is quite conceivable that Jesus’ denial of Messianic aspirations failed to be accepted by his friends as well as his foes.\* His Galilean partisans continued to hope, even after the crushing blow of his death on the cross, that sooner or later he would reveal himself and ‘restore the kingdom of Israel’ [Acts 1.6].<sup>249</sup>

The asterisk in the above quote is where one finds the 107<sup>th</sup> footnote of Vermes’s work. In this footnote he states:

This recalls a friend renowned for his understanding of the Old Testament although his knowledge of Hebrew was next to nothing. Yet each time he confessed this, people only

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid. Malina and Rohrbaugh offer similar remarks in the course of commenting on Peter’s confession: ‘If we read the question Jesus asks here as Westerners or northern Europeans, we assume Jesus knows who he is and is testing the disciples to learn whether they know. If we read the question as traditional Mediterraneans or Middle Easterners, we will assume Jesus does not know who he is and is trying to find out from significant others’ (*Social Science*, 113). After noting that Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah, they state, ‘That is how Peter now sees Jesus [i.e., as the Messiah], and since Mediterranean persons [i.e., dyadic personalities] always look at themselves through the eyes of others, *we can now presume it is now how Jesus looks at himself*’ (*Social Science*, 229, my emphasis). Again, this is not an historical analysis by them.

<sup>248</sup> This is where the question of Jesus’ self-understanding might become complicated. If what Jesus thought of himself is driven largely by what others thought about him, then in order to understand who Jesus thought he was, one needs first to look at how others, particularly significant others, among Jesus’ group viewed him. Thus, even if one is attempting to draw conclusions about Jesus’ self-understanding, knowing how others viewed him, particularly significant others like the Twelve, would appear to be essential to the task.

<sup>249</sup> Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 154.

smiled and no one believed him. The more he protested, the greater grew his reputation as a Hebrew scholar!<sup>250</sup>

This footnote is telling, in my opinion, because just as Vermes's friend was doing and saying things that were indicating and reinforcing to others that he knew Hebrew, despite the fact that this was not his intention, so, too, must Jesus have been doing and saying things that indicated and reinforced to others that he was the Davidic Messiah, regardless of whether this was his intention.<sup>251</sup> If the Twelve believed Jesus was the Davidic Messiah, there must have been something about Jesus' behavior that served as the catalyst for, and continued to reinforce, this belief, just as it was Vermes's friend's knowledge of the Hebrew Bible that led others to believe that he knew Hebrew. In other words, Jesus' behavior must have been at least *potential* Davidic messianic behavior;<sup>252</sup> and one is able to establish this by looking first and foremost at how the Twelve viewed him.

All of this is highly significant for research on the Davidic messianic question. If Jesus was viewed as the Davidic Messiah by those closest to him during his ministry and was doing and saying potential Davidic messianic things throughout this time, then this interplay demands an explanation by the historian. Why was it that the Twelve viewed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah, and why was it that he was doing and saying things that were consistent with their view? As I hope to demonstrate below, this interplay, if historical, offers a very solid basis on which to answer the Davidic messianic question positively, one which does not require the historian to argue for any one specific, tentative interpretation of Jesus' words and deeds.<sup>253</sup> I obviously have not yet offered reasons for why I believe that this interplay was historical, but I think that what I have said here demonstrates quite clearly just how relevant and valuable it can be for the

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 255n107.

<sup>251</sup> Simply appealing to the disciples' revolutionary fervor will not do. Why did they focus this revolutionary hope on Jesus? He must have done something, however inadvertent, to have caused the disciples to center their fervor on Jesus.

<sup>252</sup> Far from having 'no point of contact' with Davidic messianic expectations, as Vermes suggests (*Jesus the Jew*, 153).

<sup>253</sup> In fact, if one can answer the Davidic messianic question persuasively on the basis of this interplay alone, as I will attempt to do below, then this would, in turn, serve as a necessary lens through which one must interpret Jesus' words and deeds, thus establishing a control of sorts over these interpretations.

historian addressing the Davidic messianic question to focus attention on the Twelve's view of Jesus.

### **3.3 Jesus' Behavior and the Interplay Between Jesus and the Twelve**

As I just hinted at above, I will not be focusing solely on how the Twelve viewed Jesus, but will instead also look at Jesus' behavior in the context of this view, as it is both the Twelve's view of Jesus as well as Jesus' behavior that makes up the interplay around which my approach to the Davidic messianic question revolves. If the Twelve viewed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah, and I believe that they did, then I am interested in seeing how Jesus behaved throughout the time that they held this view of him. There is good reason to focus on this interplay between Jesus and the Twelve, as it is through just such an interplay that biblical kings and historical Davidic messianic figures were made.

#### **3.3.1 The Making of Biblical Kings and Davidic Messiahs**

Without attempting to understand the personal intentions of each of the individual kings and Davidic messianic figures that I will discuss presently, one finds that the making of these individuals as kings and Davidic Messiahs involved an interplay between these individuals and their groups during which the individual was viewed as a king or Davidic Messiah by his group and behaved in ways that were consistent with the group's view of him.<sup>254</sup>

Consider once again the first two biblical examples of individuals rising to royal status: Saul and David. The making of king Saul appears to have begun with his anointing by the prophet Samuel.<sup>255</sup> This prophetic anointing of Saul, along with the

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<sup>254</sup> It seems odd to me that scholars dealing with the Davidic messianic question have not given more attention the process by which individuals became royal figures or Davidic Messiahs. If one is attempting to determine whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure, then it would certainly be helpful, if not necessary, to have an idea of this process. I do not think that it is enough simply to determine what was expected of the Davidic Messiah. Rather, as I put it here, it is the making of a royal figure or Davidic Messiah that is worthy of significant attention.

<sup>255</sup> 1 Sam. 10.1. 1 Sam. 9.2 would seem to indicate that Saul's physical features, particularly his height, had earned him an elevated status among his group even before his anointing by Samuel. When Samuel is anointing and proclaiming Saul as king, his height is again noted (1 Sam. 10.23-24). See, e.g., André Lemaire, 'The United Monarchy: Saul, David and Solomon', in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, ed. Hershel Shanks (London: SPCK, 1989), 87: 'Saul, a Benjamite, seems to have been chosen because he was tall and strong and well qualified to wage war against Israel's enemies'. See also P. Kyle McCarter, *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (AB 8; Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 185, 193. For other reasons why Saul might have

people's acceptance of this anointing and their acclamation of Saul, elevates Saul to royal status; that is, his group now viewed him as their king.<sup>256</sup> Having been anointed and proclaimed king by the prophet Samuel and the people, Saul behaved in a manner consistent with how his group viewed him; that is, he took up the role of Israel's king.<sup>257</sup> His defense of Israel against its enemies, which was the basis of the people's desire for a king in the first place,<sup>258</sup> was particularly royal behavior,<sup>259</sup> and it was such behavior that established and reinforced his status as Israel's king, establishing it even among those who at first doubted whether Saul was suitable for this role.<sup>260</sup>

One finds a very similar interplay between David and the people of Israel. As was the case with Saul, the prophet Samuel anointed David as the king of Israel, but this was merely the first step in the making of David as Israel's king.<sup>261</sup> It was through David's military prowess, namely, his ability to defend Israel against powerful enemies, that his royal status really began to be cemented, and this was precisely because he was behaving in a manner that was in line with the expectations for Israel's king. He struck down Goliath when Saul, Israel's king at the time, and the rest of the people were in fear, and this and his other accomplishments with regard to the defense of Israel against

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caught the attention of Samuel, see John Bright, *A History of Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 188; Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel* (WBC 10; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2008), 86, 93-94.

<sup>256</sup> 1 Sam. 10:1, 20-24. On the popular election of Saul, see Bright *History of Israel*, 188: 'We are told that the people, convinced by Saul's behavior that he was Yahweh's designated, then brought him to the ancient shrine of Gilgal and there solemnly acclaimed him king'. See also Klein, *1 Samuel*, 100-101. On prophetic anointing and popular acclamation of kings in ancient Israel as a formal aspect of their rise to royal status, see R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 103-106.

<sup>257</sup> As Bright, *History of Israel*, 188, puts it, 'Saul's early career was such as to justify the confidence reposed in him'.

<sup>258</sup> 1 Sam. 8:19-20. On this, see Sigmund Mowinckel, *He that Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005 [1956]), 21-22; John Day, 'The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy', in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day (JSOTsup 270; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 72; Antti Laato, *A Star Is Rising: The Historical Development of the Old Testament Royal Ideology and the Rise of the Jewish Messianic Expectations* (University of South Florida International Studies in Formative Christianity and Judaism 5; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 62.

<sup>259</sup> See Laato, *A Star is Rising*, 64-65. See also Lemair, 'United Monarch', 87.

<sup>260</sup> 1 Sam. 11. See again Bright, *History of Israel*, 188, 190.

<sup>261</sup> Also like Saul, it is David's appearance and impressive attributes that first catch Samuel's attention. He is said to have been 'ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome' (1 Sam. 16.12), and he is also said to have been 'a man of valour, a warrior, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence; and the Lord is with him' (1 Sam. 16.18). On this, see McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 281; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 165-167.



enemies were so impressive that the people were praising him even over king Saul.<sup>262</sup> Ultimately, and probably on the basis of all of this, David is anointed as king by the people of Judah and Israel.<sup>263</sup> After he becomes king in the prophet's and people's eyes, he continues to behave in ways consistent with this view throughout his time as king.<sup>264</sup> Thus, in the accounts of both Saul and David, one finds that the making of a biblical king involved an interplay between the individual and his group, one that included the individual being viewed as a royal figure by his group and the individual behaving in a manner consistent with that view.<sup>265</sup>

As one looks at the making of the historical Davidic messianic figures who arose around the time of Jesus,<sup>266</sup> it seems that one is confronted with a process that is quite similar to that found in the accounts of Saul and David.<sup>267</sup> I look first at the account of

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<sup>262</sup> 1 Sam. 17; 1 Sam. 18:1-9. On his growing popularity and the increasing speculation that he should be Israel's king, see Bright, *History of Israel*, 192; McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 295-298. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 183, notes that David's defeat of Goliath served to strengthen his royal credentials.

<sup>263</sup> 2 Sam. 2:1-4; 5:1-5. On this anointing and popular election, see Bright, *History of Israel*, 196-198. Noting the absence of Samuel during David's anointing in 2 Sam. 2:1-4, P. Kyle McCarter, *2 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (AB 9; Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 84, explains that 'the basis for his [David's] election is popular initiative rather than prophetically mediated divine designation, as also in 5:3, where David is anointed by the elders of Israel'. Later, commenting on David's anointing by the leaders of Israel in 2 Sam. 5:1-4, he writes, 'As our narrator presents it, then, the initiative for the anointing of David is on the side of the elders of Israel. They come to Hebron and offer the kingship freely, and David passively accepts'.

<sup>264</sup> See, e.g., 2 Sam. 5:17-25; 7:1-8:18; 12:26-31.

<sup>265</sup> This is not unexpected, given that Ancient Israelites were likely dyadic personalities. See, e.g., Sarah J. Dille, 'Honor Restored: Honor, Shame and God as Redeeming Kinsman in Second Isaiah', in *Relating to the Text: Interdisciplinary and Form-Critical Insights on the Bible*, eds. Timothy J. Sandoval and Carleen Mandolfo (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 233-234.

<sup>266</sup> There is some dispute as to whether some or all of the figures whom I will include in my discussion should be considered Davidic messianic figures (see e.g., Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 194; Kenneth Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism* [SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature 5; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 258-264; Sean Freyne, 'The Herodian Period', in *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity*, eds. Markus Bockmuehl and James Carleton Paget [London: T&T Clark, 2007], 36-37). However, even if these were not Davidic messianic figures, but simply Jewish royal figures, I would still consider it to be useful to examine them. In fact, even if there were no cases whatsoever of an historical Davidic messianic figure, then the next best thing to do would be to look at Jewish royal figures. Given that a Davidic messianic figure would also be a royal one, it is not unreasonable to imagine that the making of an historical (royal) Davidic messianic figure would have involved a similar process to that of a non-Davidic-messianic royal figure.

<sup>267</sup> It is helpful, I think, to present the full accounts of these figures in order to allow this process to come through clearly.

Simon bar Giora.<sup>268</sup> Simon had initially belonged to and held a significant position among a group that desired the liberation of Israel from Roman rule before becoming a principal leader in the war.<sup>269</sup> The relevant portion of Josephus's account about Simon reads as follows:

But another war was now impending over Jerusalem. There was a certain Simon, son of Gioras and a native of Gerasa, a youth less cunning than John, who was already in possession of the city, but his superior in physical strength and audacity; the latter quality had led to his expulsion by the high priest Ananus from the province of Acrabetene, once under his command, whereupon he had joined the brigands who had seized Masada. At first they regarded him with suspicion, and permitted him and his following of women access only to the lower part of the fortress, occupying the upper quarters themselves; but afterwards, as a man of congenial disposition and apparently to be trusted, he was allowed to accompany them on their marauding expeditions and took part in their raids upon the surrounding district. His efforts to tempt them to greater enterprises were, however, unsuccessful; for they had grown accustomed to the fortress and were afraid to venture far, so to speak, from their lair. He, on the contrary, was aspiring to despotic power and cherishing high ambitions (ὁ δὲ τυραννιῶν καὶ μεγάλων ἐπιέμενος); accordingly on hearing of the death of Ananus, he withdrew to the hills, where, by proclaiming liberty for slaves and rewards for the free (προκηρύξας δούλοις μὲν ἐλευθερίαν, γέρας δὲ ἐλευθέροις), he gathered around him the villains from every quarter. Having now collected a strong force, he first overran the villages in the hills, and then through continual additions to his numbers was emboldened to descend into the lowlands. And now when he was becoming a terror to the towns, many men of standing were seduced by his strength and career of unbroken success into joining him; and his was no longer an army of mere serfs or brigands, but one including numerous citizen recruits, subservient to his command as to a king (ὥς πρὸς βασιλέα πειθαρχεῖν). He now overran not only the province of Acrabetene but the whole district extending to greater Idumaea. For at a village called Nain he had thrown up a wall and used the place as a fortress to secure his position; while he turned to account numerous caves in the valley known as Pheretae, widening some and finding others adapted to his purpose, as store chambers and repositories for plunder. Here, too, he laid up his spoils of corn, and here most of his troops were quartered. His object was evident: he was training his force and making all these preparations for an attack on Jerusalem.<sup>270</sup>

According to this account, Simon had impressive physical characteristics and was quite courageous, and it is likely that such impressive features and his early successes in battles with the Romans would have contributed to his increasing rise in

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<sup>268</sup> Rather than discussing these Davidic messianic figures in chronological order, as is often the procedure, I will instead look first at those I believe provide the clearest picture of the making of a Davidic messianic figure.

<sup>269</sup> Horsley, 'Popular Messianic Movements', 489, writes, 'From the very beginning of the revolt he was leader of a fairly substantial fighting force and was apparently one of the real heroes of the audacious victory over the Roman army advancing on Jerusalem in October 66 (*J.W.* 2.19,2§521)'. See *J.W.* 2.517-521.

<sup>270</sup> *J.W.* 4.503-513, trans. Thackeray.

status.<sup>271</sup> After having been driven away by more moderate Jewish factions involved in the war, and after having been unable to convince those to whom he was driven away at Masada to go out on greater military excursions, Simon left them and went about ‘proclaiming liberty to those in slavery, and a reward to those already free’, gathered a significant group of men around him, and proceeded to lead successful military battles before setting his sights on Jerusalem. This portion of the account appears to indicate that Simon was already being attributed an elevated leadership status by this group that he had gathered and with which he was fighting these battles. As his success in leading military confrontations continued, Simon began to be viewed as a king by his group. Thereafter, he continued to behave in a manner consistent with that view, i.e., he acted in the role of king for his group, taking possession by force of strategic areas,<sup>272</sup> leading the fight for liberation against the Romans, and even minting coins celebrating ‘the redemption of Zion’.<sup>273</sup> The making of Simon as a Davidic messianic figure appears, therefore, to have involved an escalating interplay between Simon and his group, with the group at some point viewing Simon as their king and Simon behaving in a manner consistent with the group’s view.

The account of Menahem, the (grand)son of Judas the Galilean,<sup>274</sup> provides another fairly clear picture of the sort of process by which a Davidic messianic figure was made. Josephus writes:

At this period a certain Menahem, son of Judas surnamed the Galilean – that redoubtable doctor who in old days, under Quirinius, had upbraided the Jews for recognizing the Romans as masters when they already had God – took his intimate friends off with him to Masada, where he broke into king Herod’s armoury and provided arms both for his fellow-townsmen and for other brigands; then, with these men for his bodyguard, he returned like a veritable king to Jerusalem (οἷα δὴ βασιλεὺς ἐπάνεισιν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα), became the leader of the revolution, and directed the siege of the palace [i.e., ‘having become’ (γενόμενος) the leader, he directed the siege]....But the reduction of the

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<sup>271</sup> See Hengel, *Zealots*, 297; Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 66. See also Horsley, ‘Popular Messianic Movements’, 489, who notes that ‘because of [Simon’s] charismatic (messianic?) qualities of “physical strength and courage” he continued as a popularly recognized leader of the social revolution in the toparchy of Acrabatene’.

<sup>272</sup> Horsley, ‘Popular Messianic Movements’, 489, suggests that Simon’s behavior, particularly his taking control of Idumea and especially Hebron, was intentionally designed to evoke memories of king David. He and Hanson reassert this claim in *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 121-122.

<sup>273</sup> See Hengel, *Zealots*, 297; Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 66.

<sup>274</sup> I adopt here Evans’s terminology in *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 64.

strongholds and the murder of the high-priests Ananias inflated and brutalized Menahem to such an extent that he believed himself without rival in the conduct of affairs and became an insufferable tyrant. The partisans of Eleazar now rose against him; they remarked to each other that, after revolting from the Romans for love of liberty, they ought not to sacrifice this liberty to a Jewish hangman and to put up with a master who, even were he to abstain from violence, was anyhow far below themselves; and that if they must have a leader, anyone would be better than Menahem. So they laid their plans to attack him in the Temple, whither he had gone up in a state to pay his devotions, arrayed in royal robes and attended by his suite of armed fanatics. When Eleazar and his companions rushed upon him, and the rest of the people to gratify their rage took up stones and began pelting the arrogant doctor, imagining that his downfall would crush the whole revolt, Menahem and his followers offered a momentary resistance; then, seeing themselves assailed by the whole multitude, they fled whithersoever they could; all who were caught were massacred, and a hunt was made for any hiding. A few succeeded in escaping by stealth to Masada, among others Eleazar, son of Jairus and a relative of Menahem, and subsequently despot of Masada. Menahem himself, who had taken refuge in the place called Ophlas and there ignominiously concealed himself, was caught, dragged into the open, and after being subjected to all kinds of torture, put to death. His lieutenants, along with Absalom, his most eminent supporter in his tyranny, met with a similar fate.<sup>275</sup>

Based on this account it would seem that Menahem, like Simon bar Giora, had been part of a group that sought the redemption of Israel. Menahem's connection to Judas the Galilean perhaps provided him with an initial elevated status among this group,<sup>276</sup> but in any case, he seems to have acted in some sort of leadership role when he gathered together some among his group and led a successful raid on Herod's armory, providing fresh arms for the group. After and probably at least in part because of this assault, Menahem was believed to be a king by his group and entered Jerusalem under this pretense.<sup>277</sup> Throughout the time his group viewed him as their king, Menahem

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<sup>275</sup> *J.W.* 2.433-448, trans. Thackeray.

<sup>276</sup> Hengel, *Zealots*, 294, makes this same point, although probably overemphasizing the presence of a defined and sustained Zealot movement for decades prior to Menahem.

<sup>277</sup> Mason states that 'Menachem has equipped himself with such an intimidating bodyguard, typical of the tyrant-king, that he has no trouble imposing himself as leader of the rebellion in Jerusalem' (note 2721 on *J.W.* 2.434). All citations and quotations from Mason are taken from the Project on Ancient Cultural Engagement [PACE] website, <http://pace.mcmaster.ca/york/york/texts.html>, which is an online version of Mason's commentary and translation that is being published in print by Brill [*Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*]. He also notes that although he has used the phrase 'spear-bearers' rather than bodyguards, 'These δορυφόροι could be understood more neutrally as "bodyguards" or as the "armed thugs, henchmen" of a tyrant—as here. Notwithstanding the etymology reflected in my translation, the word had an established usage for the intimidating guards that a king and especially a tyrant gathered around himself' (Mason, note 1653 on *J.W.* 262). Furthermore, in note 2722 he refers readers to the example of Athronges 'for another comparison of a rebel leader with a king, on the basis of his having

continued to act in a manner consistent with this role. He planned and carried out further assaults with the armed group under his command, and he even appeared in the Temple adorned in royal robes with his company of men, probably as some sort of expression of his royal status.<sup>278</sup> Thus, like Simon, the making of the Davidic Messiah Menahem appears to have been the product of an interplay between him and his group, with Menahem continually being attributed a greater status by them, culminating at some point with the status of king, and Menahem continually behaving in a manner consistent with his group's view of him, including behaving as one would expect a king to behave.

Athronges's path to becoming a Davidic messianic figure does not vary greatly from that of Simon bar Giora and Menahem. About Athronges, Josephus writes:

Then there was a certain Athronges, a man distinguished neither for the position of his ancestors nor by the excellence of his character, nor for any abundance of means but merely a shepherd completely unknown to everybody although he was remarkable for his great stature and feats of strength. This man had the temerity to aspire to the kingship (ἐτόλμησεν ἐπὶ βασιλείᾳ), thinking that if he obtained it he would enjoy freedom to act more outrageously; as for meeting death, he did not attach much importance to the loss of his life under such circumstances. He also had four brothers, and they too were tall men and confident of being very successful through their feats of strength, and he believed them to be a strong point in his bid for the kingdom (πρόεχμα εἶναι τῆς καθέξεως τῆς βασιλείας δοκοῦντες). Each of them commanded an armed band, for a large number of people had gathered round them. Though they were commanders, they acted under his orders whenever they went on raids and fought by themselves (καὶ οἷδε μὲν στρατηγοὶ ἦσαν καὶ ὑπεστράτευον αὐτῷ ὅποσα εἰς τὰς μάχας φοιτῶντες δι' αὐτῶν). Athronges himself put on the diadem (ὁ δὲ διάδημα περιθέμενος) and held council to discuss what things were to be done, but everything depended upon his own decision. This man kept his power for a long while, for he had the title of king (βασιλεῖ τε κεκλημένῳ [lit. 'having been called king']) and nothing to prevent him from doing as he wished. He and his brothers also applied themselves vigorously to slaughtering the

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surrounded himself with compliant "generals" and fighters'. See note 281 below for his comments on Athronges.

<sup>278</sup> See Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 288 who write, 'He [Menahem] and his followers were giving ceremonial expression to his office in the Temple'. See also Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 439: 'Josephus's description (*J.W.* 2.17.9 §444) suggests that Menahem's worship had an official air about it'. Commenting on Menahem's actions, Mason directs the reader to his comments elsewhere on the word προσκυνέω, where he writes, 'Although it occurs nearly 100 times in Josephus, sometimes with a more general sense, it refers most specifically to the practice of prostration (or possibly the blowing of reverential kisses) before Oriental kings as quasi-divine powers (cf. Herodotus 1.119.1; 2.121; 8.118); Josephus often uses it pejoratively (see Feldman's note to "later" at Ant. 2.195 in BJP 3). Alexander received this honor in the East and controversially sought to persuade his Macedonian colleagues at Bactra to join in, a request that provoked indignation and may have precipitated the death of his associate Callisthenes (Arrian, *Anab.* 4.10.5-12.5; cf. Walbank 1992: 38-39, 42-43). Josephus' Agrippa will use the term twice more in this speech, for the complete subjection to Rome now required of former powers or states once in thrall to Persia (2.366, 380)' (note 2258 on *J.W.* 2.360).

Romans and the king's men, toward both of whom they acted with a similar hatred, toward the latter because of the arrogance that they had shown during the reign of Herod, and toward the Romans because of the injuries that they were held to have inflicted at the present time. But as time went on they became more and more savage (toward all) alike. And there was no escape for any in any way, for sometimes the rebels killed in hope of gain and at other times from the habit of killing. On one occasion near Emmaus they even attacked a company of Romans, who were bringing grain and weapons to their army. Surrounding the centurion Arius, who commanded the detachment, and forty of the bravest of his foot-soldiers, they shot them down. The rest were terrified at their fate but with the protection given them by Gratus and the royal troops that were with him they made their escape, leaving their dead behind. This kind of warfare they kept up for a long time and caused the Romans no little trouble while also inflicting much damage on their own nation. But the brothers were eventually subdued, one of them in an engagement with Gratus, the other in one with Ptolemy. And when Archelaus captured the eldest, the last brother, grieving at the other's fate and seeing that he could no longer find a way to save himself now that he was all alone and utterly exhausted, stripped of his force, surrendered to Archelaus on receiving a pledge sworn by his faith in God (that he would not be harmed). But this happened later.<sup>279</sup>

Athronges seems to have been involved with a fairly substantial movement that desired the overthrow of Roman rule in Israel, and it was among this group that Athronges gained a leadership status, which perhaps partly stemmed from his physical attributes and courage; as Josephus puts it in *J.W.* 2.60, these things served as 'recommendations' for a royal role.<sup>280</sup> At some point during his time as the group's

<sup>279</sup> *Ant.* 17.278-284, trans. Ralph Marcus. See also *J.W.* 2.60-65, trans. Thackeray: 'Now, too, a mere shepherd had the temerity to aspire to the throne. He was called Athrongaeus, and his sole recommendations, to raise such hopes (προϋξένει δ' αὐτῷ τὴν ἐλπίδα), were vigour of body, a soul contemptuous of death, and four brothers resembling himself. To each of these he entrusted an armed band and employed them as generals and satraps for his raids (τούτων ἐκάστῳ λόχον ὑποξεύζας ἐνοπλον ὥσπερ στρατηγοῖς ἐχρῆτο καὶ σατράπαις ἐπὶ τὰς καταδρομὰς), while he himself, like a king (καθάπερ βασιλεὺς), handled matters of graver moment. It was now that he donned the diadem (τότε μὲν οὖν ἐαυτῷ περιτίθησιν διάδημα), but his raiding expeditions throughout the country with his brothers continued long afterwards. Their principle object was to kill Romans and royalists, but no Jew, from whom they had anything to gain, escaped, if he fell into their hands. On one occasion they ventured to surround, near Emmaus, an entire Roman company, engaged in conveying corn and arms to the legion. Their centurion Arius and forty of his bravest men were shot down by the brigands; the remainder, in danger of a like fate, were rescued through the intervention of Gratus with his Sebastenians. After perpetrating throughout the war many such outrages upon compatriot and foreigner alike, three of them were eventually captured, the eldest by Archelaus, the two next by Gratus and Ptolemy; the fourth made terms with Archelaus and surrendered. Such was the end to which they ultimately came; but at the period of which we are speaking, these men were making the whole of Judaea one scene of guerilla warfare'.

<sup>280</sup> Josephus uses the verb προϋξένει, here translated as 'recommendations'. Mason states, 'This recherché verb (προξενέω) occurs 4 times throughout War (also 1.458; 3.452; 5.66) and once in Antiquities (16.56), though it is rare after the classical period (e.g., Euripides, *Ion* 335; *Med.* 724; Sophocles, *Trach.* 726; *Oed.* col. 465) and before Josephus. Its literal meaning is to serve as a "public guest" (i.e., state-appointed ambassador in or from another place: πρόξενος)—from there, by degrees of abstraction, to "introduce" or "recommend" one person to another for business purposes. Usage of the verb picks up after Josephus, and

leader, Athronges began to be viewed by his group as their king, probably because he was behaving like a king, and he continued to act in this role throughout the rest of his career. As Josephus tells it, he appointed his brothers, who were subordinate to him, as generals and satraps to lead troops in battle,<sup>281</sup> while he behaved like a king and dealt with other, more significant affairs;<sup>282</sup> he was called king by his group; and although one is apparently not told of Athronges's ultimate fate, it seems that he continued to behave as the group's king, carrying out various attacks against the Romans until the movement was finally decimated.

The account of Simon of Perea offers a similar picture of the making of a Davidic messianic figure. Josephus's account runs as follows:

There was also Simon, a slave of King Herod but a handsome man, who took pre-eminence by size and bodily strength, and was expected to go farther (ἐπὶ μέγα προύχων τε καὶ πεπιστευμένος). Elated by the unsettled conditions of affairs (οὗτος ἀρθεις [lit., 'elevated, raised up'] τῇ ἀκρίσῃ τῶν πραγμάτων), he was bold enough to place the diadem on his head (διάδημά τε ἐτόλμησε περιθέσθαι), and having got together a body of men, he was himself also proclaimed king by them in their madness (καὶ τινος πλήθους συστάντος καὶ αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς ἀναγγελθεὶς μανίᾳ τῇ ἐκείνων), and he rated himself worthy of this beyond anyone else. After burning the royal palace in Jericho, he plundered and carried off the things that had been seized there. He also set fire to many other royal residences in many parts of the country and utterly destroyed them after permitting his fellow-rebels to take as booty whatever had been left in them. And he would have done something still more serious if attention had not quickly been turned to him. For Gratus, the officer of the royal troops, joined the Romans and with what forces he had went to meet Simon. A long and heavy battle was fought between them, and most of the Peraeans, who were disorganized and fighting with more recklessness than

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we even find "hope" (ἐλπίς) as direct object in the 2nd-cent. Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 7.13.1' (note 377 to *J.W.* 2.60). See also Hengel, *Zealots*, 292.

<sup>281</sup> Mason observes, 'Satraps (from Old Persian kshathra-pavan, "protector of the country," where the first term means "country") were provincial governors in the Persian empire, under the king. Josephus continues his sarcastic tone by portraying Athronges as a would-be Oriental despot, with "governors" and "generals" doing his bidding. The scope and loftiness of his ambition (in contrast to those of mere local strongmen) are among his distinguishing features. It is impossible to tell from this rhetorical portrait whether the man actually cultivated contacts in the Parthian empire (perhaps the Judean diaspora there), which is conceivable, or whether Josephus supplies the Oriental flavor only for dramatic effect' (note 381 on *J.W.* 2.61).

<sup>282</sup> Translated above as 'handled matters of graver moment'. Mason comments on Josephus's statement here, suggesting, 'Or "more solemn, revered, dignified" (σεμνός, here comparative)—elsewhere an adjective of high praise: War 2.119; 4.319; Apion 2.221. Although this may be nothing more than sarcasm on Josephus' part (as also perhaps Ant. 2.3), Bradley (1989: 1-17) observes that in early modern slave revolts, the rebel leaders often assumed titles that mimicked those of the established order' (note 382 on *J.W.* 2.61).

science, were destroyed. As for Simon, he tried to save himself by fleeing through a ravine, but Gratus intercepted him and cut off his head.<sup>283</sup>

Based on this account, it seems likely that Simon also had belonged to a group that hoped for the redemption of Israel. He appears to have had some leadership status because of his physical attributes,<sup>284</sup> and it seems probable in light of Josephus's statement that he was elevated by the disorderly state of things that his leadership status also might have been the result of some sort of confrontation(s) with the Romans. Probably because of some success in armed conflicts, certainly royal behavior, Simon was acclaimed king by his group, and he appears to have continued to behave in a kingly manner, fighting against the Romans until he was defeated and killed in battle. Though the account of Simon's career is not as detailed as some of the Davidic messianic figures discussed above, one is still able to discern the sort of individual-group interplay that should by now be familiar in the making of historical Davidic messianic figures.

What is known about Simon ben Kosiba indicates that, even at a later period, the making of a Davidic Messiah involved a group-individual interplay that is similar to that which has been observed thus far. There are no clear indications as to how or why he might have emerged as a leader among his group, but like those Davidic messianic figures before him, he appears to have been identified by his group as the Davidic Messiah because of his success in liberating Israel from the Romans. This may be inferred from a text like *Lam. Rab.* 2.2.4, where one reads about how Simon's military success led Aqiba, and very likely others as well, to make his infamous messianic endorsement of Simon.<sup>285</sup> That Simon behaved in ways consistent with the Davidic messianic role is evident not only in his success in (very briefly and limitedly) liberating

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<sup>283</sup> *Ant.* 17.273-277, trans. Marcus. See also *J.W.* 2.57-59, trans. Thackeray: 'In Peraea Simon, one of the royal slaves, proud of his tall and handsome figure, assumed the diadem (περιτίθησιν μὲν ἑαυτῷ διάδημα). Perambulating the country with the brigands whom he had collected, he burnt down the royal palace at Jericho and many other stately mansions, such incendiarism providing him with an easy opportunity for plunder. Not a house of any respectability would have escaped the flames, had not Gratus, the commander of the royal infantry, with the archers of Trachonitis and the finest troops of the Sebastenians, gone out to encounter this rascal. In the ensuing engagement numbers of the Peraeans fell. Simon himself, endeavouring to escape up a steep ravine, was intercepted by Gratus, who struck the fugitive from the side a blow on the neck, which severed his head from his body'.

<sup>284</sup> *Ant.* 17.273. See Hengel, *Zealots*, 292.

<sup>285</sup> See Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 196-197.



Israel, but also in his letters and coins, where he takes the title of ‘prince of Israel’ (נשיא ישראל), which was probably regarded as a Davidic messianic designation.<sup>286</sup>

### 3.3.2 Summarizing the Making of Biblical Kings and Davidic Messiahs

After having considered all of this evidence, from the accounts of the first two kings of Israel to that of the leader of the second Jewish war against the Romans, I think that a relatively clear and consistent picture of the making of a biblical king and Davidic messianic figure emerges. These individuals seem to have belonged initially to a group with whom they had shared interests,<sup>287</sup> and each individual also appears to have emerged as a leader among his group. At some point in the course of acting as the group’s leader, these groups began to view the individual as their king, probably because his behavior in the course of his leadership inspired this view, after which the individual continued to behave in ways that were consistent with the group’s view of him, i.e., in a manner consistent with the royal or Davidic messianic role.<sup>288</sup> Thus, the making of a king or Davidic messianic figure would best be described, I think, as a group-driven process, one involving a continuous interplay between the group and the individual, and one out of which the individual emerges as a king or Davidic Messiah.

In light of all of this, the relevance and value of understanding the group dynamic of which Jesus was a part, particularly the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve, becomes quite obvious to me. For, if one’s goal is to determine whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure, then one should be interested in seeing whether the interplay between the Twelve and Jesus has any significant points of contact with the interplay between these various royal figures and their groups. In fact, one may be more specific and say that, in light of the foregoing discussion, if Jesus were a Davidic

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<sup>286</sup> Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 202; Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 185.

<sup>287</sup> In each case discussed above, the redemption of Israel appears to have been the primary shared interest among the group.

<sup>288</sup> I do not believe that there is a consistent or discernable sequence of events. Royal/Davidic messianic behavior might have sparked the initial speculation about these individual’s possible royal/messianic status, or royal/Davidic messianic behavior might have followed the group’s election of an individual to lead them in the fight for redemption as the group’s king, much like what happened with Saul and David. Nevertheless, the point is that the individual and the group are both feeding into and affirming the individual’s status as king/Davidic Messiah, i.e., they are engaging in a group-process of identity and role formation. Again, one should not find this surprising given what has been said about the dyadic personality.

messianic figure, then one would expect to find that the Twelve viewed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah and that Jesus behaved in a manner consistent with their view of him. And this, as I stated above, is precisely what I will be looking for as I attempt to answer the Davidic messianic question.

### **3.3.4 The Synoptics**

Before closing out this section, I should, as I did in the previous chapter, also draw attention to the Synoptics. As I suggested above, it seems that the Synoptic authors found a verbal messianic claim on the part of Jesus to be essentially unimportant. However, what they did appear to believe was of importance was the messianic status ascribed to Jesus by others and his fulfillment of that role, i.e., his behaving as the Messiah. All throughout the Gospels one finds messianic proclamations on the part of his disciples and wider following, as well as messianic speculation among his opposition, and one also finds that Jesus' behavior is portrayed as the fulfillment of biblical messianic prophecies.<sup>289</sup> Therefore, it seems that for those who sought to demonstrate that Jesus was the (at least Davidic) Messiah by writing an account of his life, what was significant was the proclamation of *others* that Jesus was the Messiah together with Jesus' acting in that role.

### **3.4 Davidic Messianic Behavior**

I have spoken repeatedly above about Davidic messianic behavior and how the Davidic messianic figures I discussed above acted in a manner consistent with the Davidic messianic role. I also stated that I would be looking for such Davidic messianic behavior on the part of Jesus when it comes time to implement my approach to the Davidic messianic question. This, however, raises an obvious question, namely, what does Davidic messianic behavior entail? If I am to determine whether Jesus was doing and saying things that were in line with the Davidic messianic role, then it is necessary to establish some sort of profile of the Davidic Messiah.

Furthermore, as I illustrated in my review of recent research on the Davidic messianic question, there is a great deal of emphasis on the expectation that the Davidic

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<sup>289</sup> See, e.g., Mark 8.29 and pars.; Mark 10.35-45 and pars.; Mark 10.47-48 and pars.; Mark 11.1-10 and pars.; Lk. 7.18-23/Matt.11.2-6; Mark 14.53-62 and pars.; Mark 15.26 and pars.

Messiah would be an earthly military leader. I argued, however, that by focusing so much attention on this aspect of Davidic messianic expectations, other, equally significant aspects of the Davidic messianic role have been neglected. There are other things that one might do or say, apart from or in addition to harboring earthly military ambitions, that would be consistent with the Davidic messianic role. For both of these reasons, then, it would be helpful to review briefly the Davidic messianic expectations of Jesus' day.

### 3.4.1 Davidic Messianic Expectations

Numerous studies have been published over the last few decades that have dealt with Davidic and other messianic expectations, and there is not much that I can add to this wealth of scholarly literature.<sup>290</sup> Therefore, as I attempt now to review Davidic messianic expectations, I will simply follow some of the major works that are available with the hope that the manner in which I present my review will allow the reader to make his or her way through it quickly and without feeling as though I have been too redundant.

#### *Preliminary Issues*

There are several preliminary issues that should be dealt with briefly before I begin my review of Davidic messianic expectations. Probably the most important of these issues is the now long-recognized diversity of messianic expectations in the Judaism(s) around the time of Jesus. For decades now, scholars have been careful to point out that there was no uniform belief in *the* Messiah, but rather a variegated spectrum of messianic figures, and I would completely agree with this.<sup>291</sup> However,

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<sup>290</sup> For some of the standard reviews of Davidic and other messianic expectations, see Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel: From Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1956); Mowinkel, *He that Cometh*; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. – A.D. 135)*, vol. 2, revised and edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979); Collins, *Scepter and Star*; Gerbern S. Oegema, *The Anointed and His People: Messianic Expectations from the Maccabees to Bar Kochba* (JSPsup; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Fitzmyer, *One Who is to Come*; Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*.

<sup>291</sup> See e.g., Jacob Neusner's preface in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, eds. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), ix-xiv; John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 3-4; Fitzmyer, *One to Come*, 132; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, 'Messianic Ideas in the Apocalyptic and Related Literature of Early Judaism', in *The Messiahs in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 112-113. As I tried to demonstrate above, there is apparently not only a clearly diverse set of messianic

because I have chosen to pursue the very specific question of whether Jesus was a *Davidic* messianic figure, in what follows I will only consider *Davidic* messianic expectations.

A second preliminary issue of some significance is that of how one defines ‘messiah’ and ‘messianic’. Many have found it necessary to define a set of criteria for determining whom one considers a ‘messiah’ (משיח) and/or what one considers to be a messianic text, given that one’s definition very likely will affect their review of messianic expectations.<sup>292</sup> Some prefer a rather strict and narrow set of criteria for defining ‘messiah’ and labeling a text as ‘messianic’,<sup>293</sup> whereas others opt for a somewhat looser set of criteria.<sup>294</sup> I am of the opinion that the looser set of criteria is more helpful for understanding the Davidic and other messianic expectations around the time of Jesus.<sup>295</sup> However, for my purposes in this study, I think that whichever

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expectations that existed around the time of Jesus, but also a fairly significant level of category mixing in messianic and eschatological speculation.

<sup>292</sup> See, e.g., Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 3-4; Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 11-14; Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come*, 1-7. For a comprehensive discussion of this issue, with further options for defining ‘messiah’/‘messianic’, see Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 193-205.

<sup>293</sup> See, e.g., Fitzmyer, *One Who Is to Come*, 1-7; Marinus de Jonge, ‘The Use of the Word “Anointed” in the Time of Jesus’, *Novum Testamentum* 8 (1966), 133; Idem, ‘Messiah’, in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, ed. David Noel Freedman (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 777-778.

<sup>294</sup> See, e.g., Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 11-14; Gerbern Oegema, *The Anointed and His People*, 21-27, 31-34. Stefan Schreiber, *Gesalbter und König: Titel und Konzeptionen der königlichen Gesalbtenenerwartung in frühjüdischen und urchristlichen Schriften* (BZAW 105; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 29-32.

<sup>295</sup> I would, along with other scholars, agree that Collins’s definition is an excellent working one: ‘In short, a messiah is an eschatological figure who sometimes, but not necessarily always, is designated as a משיח in the sources’. I do, however, have reservations about defining a messianic figure as necessarily eschatological. Doing so assumes that that one should define ‘Messiah’ only according to how this term was understood among some groups at a later point in Jewish history. In this case, the definition would involve a certain degree of circularity. If the type of eschatology present in the texts of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E. to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E. was not present during the pre-exilic and most of the post-exilic period, then I fail to see why one should be compelled to include it in one’s definition of ‘Messiah’. Thus, I would not have a problem with considering a non-eschatological figure around the time of Jesus a Messiah of some sort if he were taking up the sort of role associated with the same sort of non-eschatological anointed figure in biblical texts. If, hypothetically, for example, an individual sought to liberate Israel from Roman rule, was believed to be a king descended from David, did, in fact, restore Israel, and began to reign over Israel, defending Israel from enemies and providing various types of security (economic, military, etc.), then I fail to see how a lack of eschatology on his or his group’s part would disqualify him from being categorized as a royal (Davidic) Messiah. For a somewhat similar perspective on the issue, see Smith, ‘What Is Implied?’, 66-72; Idem, ‘Robbers, Jurists, Prophets, and Magicians’, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, vol. 4 (1977): 185-195. This observation becomes relevant when one considers the historical Davidic messianic figures who arose around the time of Jesus, as there have been some who wish to challenge the common belief that these were Davidic messianic figures because of their lack of eschatology (see note 266 above).

definition one works with, the texts and movements that I will be looking at below will remain relevant. For example, when I consider biblical texts, I will primarily discuss those texts that speak explicitly of an anointed Davidic king.<sup>296</sup> Moreover, even if one believes that one should refrain from labeling these anointed Davidic kings as ‘Messiahs’, the texts that mention these anointed Davidic kings clearly shaped later Davidic messianic expectations, thus making them at least ‘proto-messianic’ texts, to use Chester’s terminology.<sup>297</sup> This, in my opinion, makes it worthwhile to examine them.

Furthermore, although there might be disagreement about whether certain extra-biblical texts that I will include in my discussion are to be considered Davidic messianic texts, I think that the profile of the Davidic Messiah, i.e., my description of what sorts of things were expected of him, that I put together on the basis of all the texts that I will look at would not differ greatly if some of the texts that I will use were excluded from consideration by other scholars. In other words, I think that, in the end, there would likely still be agreement about the general description of Davidic messianic expectations that I will offer below.

Having dealt briefly with these preliminary issues, I turn my attention now to the biblical texts that would come to influence Davidic messianic expectations.

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<sup>296</sup> In some cases, the Davidic king is not explicitly referred to as ‘anointed’ (מָשִׁיחַ), but this is not a problem given that there is widespread agreement, even among scholars who disagree about definitions, that Israel’s kings would have been anointed figures, even if they are not labeled as such in a certain text. Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 11-12, puts it this way: ‘It is not helpful, however, to restrict the discussion of messianism too narrowly to occurrences of מָשִׁיחַ or its translation equivalents (*christos*, *unctus*, etc.). On the one hand, since the term ‘messiah’ is commonly used in later tradition for the ideal Davidic king of the future, passages such as Jer 23:5-6, which clearly refer to such a figure, may reasonably be dubbed ‘messianic,’ even though the specific term does not occur’. Fitzmyer, *One Who Is to Come*, 106-107, also observes, ‘There is no evidence that any king of Israel or Judah was not anointed’. See also R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 103-106, who is approvingly quoted by James H. Charlesworth, ‘From Jewish Messianology to Christian Christology: Some Caveats and Perspectives’, in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs* (eds. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest Frerichs; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 229: ‘R. de Vaux correctly pointed out that “it is certain that all the kings of Judah were anointed, and it is probably true of all the kings of Israel’.

<sup>297</sup> Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 229: ‘For my own part, I would prefer to designate this kind of passage as, in general, “proto-messianic”; that is, I would see such passages as providing the basis for the development of a fully messianic hope within Judaism and focus on a figure who will bring final deliverance. They do not portray such a figure, or hope, as such themselves, but they are latent with expectation and potential significance, and it takes very little indeed to develop this further’. See also, Craig A. Evans, ‘Messianic Hope and Messianic Figures in Late Antiquity’, 1-8, accessed January, 2012, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/christchair/files/christchair/Evans%20Messianic%20Hopes.pdf> (published in the *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 3 [2006]: 9-40).

### *Biblical Texts*

Before looking at biblical texts specifically about Davidic kings, the account of Saul should briefly be mentioned again. This account is worth another look because one finds in it the emergence of a central expectation for all of Israel's kings, present, future, or eschatological, namely, the expectation that Israel's king would defend or redeem Israel from the hands of its enemies. As noted above, Saul was anointed as the first king of Israel by the prophet Samuel specifically in response to the people's demand that they be allowed to 'be like other nations' and have a king that 'may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles'.<sup>298</sup> It is later reported that Saul did in fact defeat the Ammonites, cementing his status as king of Israel.<sup>299</sup> The evidence suggests, therefore, that defending or redeeming Israel was from the first central to the royal role.

After Saul had fallen out of favor with God, David was chosen to take his place as the next king over Israel. As illustrated above, David had even greater military success than Saul, ensuring the security of Israel by defending it against its enemies,<sup>300</sup> and this was probably a significant part of his emergence as Israel's king precisely because it was something that the people expected from a king.<sup>301</sup> Thus, one finds that defending Israel was a central royal task for David as well.

However, it is important to note that there are additional expectations that begin to be established for Davidic kings in this early period of the monarchy as well. For example, the expectation for just and righteous leadership on the part of a Davidic king is established, as is a significant connection between him and the Temple. The former is apparent in 2 Sam. 8.15, and the latter is evident in the narrative of 2 Sam. 7:1-17, where one reads that after 'the LORD had given [David] rest from all his enemies around him', David decides that he should build a house for God. Of course, David is informed by God that it is not he who will build this house for God, but one of his offspring,

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<sup>298</sup> 1 Sam. 8.19-20. Laato, *A Star Is Rising*, 64, observes, 'The king [sic] main task was military operations against the enemies of Israel'. See also R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 108-110; Lemair, 'The United Monarch', 87, who notes that Saul's principle task was to conduct a war of liberation.

<sup>299</sup> 1 Sam. 11. Laato observes that Saul's defeat of the Ammonites was 'the decisive factor' in establishing his monarchy (*A Star Is Rising*, 65). For more on Saul's military victory establishing his status as king, see p. 61-62 and notes therein above.

<sup>300</sup> 1 Sam. 16.13; 2 Sam. 23.1-7.

<sup>301</sup> For David's rise, see p. 62-63 and notes therein above.

Solomon, but the connection between the Davidic kings and the Temple remains clear.

As Nathan explains to David:

Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established forever. In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.<sup>302</sup>

Thus, virtually as early as one finds expectations that Davidic kings would defend or redeem Israel, one also finds the expectation for a just and righteous king who will have some sort of significant link to the Temple, which will act as a sign and legitimation of his kingship.<sup>303</sup>

Numerous psalms reinforce these expectations for Davidic kings. The expectation that a Davidic king would defend or redeem Israel is clearly assumed in Psalm 2, believed to be a royal psalm,<sup>304</sup> where the nations are told that it is useless for them to conspire ‘against the LORD and his anointed’ and that the anointed one will ‘break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel’.<sup>305</sup> The

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<sup>302</sup> 2 Sam 7.11-17. Evans, ‘Messianic Hopes’, 2, states, ‘From this oracle the messianic “paradigm” will emerge: The Davidic descendant is expected to build God’s House, he will be established on the throne of his kingdom, and God will be his Father, while he will be God’s son’.

<sup>303</sup> Donna Runnalls, ‘The King as Temple Builder: A Messianic Typology’, in *Spirit within Structure: Essays in Honor of George Johnson on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. E. J. Furcha (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1983), 21, observes that, as is typical of the ancient Near East, ‘the dynastic promise must be understood to be closely tied to the temple-building activity of the king: as David’s son would build a temple for Yahweh, so Yahweh, through Solomon, would build a “house” for David. The pattern is one of mutual authentication’. Like Runnalls, various scholars note that in the ancient Near East in general there was a close association between kings and temples that follow this ‘pattern of mutual authentication’. See, e.g., R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 113-114; Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 90; J. J. M. Roberts, ‘The Bible and the Literature of the Ancient Near East’, in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays*, ed. J. J. M. Roberts (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 53-54; Michael Avioz, *Nathan’s Oracle (2 Samuel 7) and Its Interpreters* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 13-14.

<sup>304</sup> Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I, 1-50: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 16; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 7.

<sup>305</sup> Ps. 2.1-2, 9. See Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 67; Schürer, *History*, vol. 2, 525; Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 54.

same expectation is found in Psalm 89, which begins with a hymn of praise and goes on to state:

I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I exalted one chosen from the people. I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him; my hand shall always remain with him....The enemy shall not outwit him....I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him....He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!' ....I will establish his line forever, and his throne as long as the heavens endure.<sup>306</sup>

As the psalm shifts to a lament, possibly implying the destruction of Jerusalem,<sup>307</sup> the expectation that the Davidic king would defend Israel from such a fate is clearly assumed; the psalmist laments and ponders the fact that the Davidic king has been defeated by foreign powers.<sup>308</sup>

The psalms also provide evidence that the Davidic king was expected to be more than a military leader. Psalm 72, another royal psalm,<sup>309</sup> demonstrates this quite clearly. It supplements the picture of the Davidic kings as defenders and redeemers of Israel with themes that become prevalent not only in later biblical writings, but also in the extra-biblical texts that speak explicitly of the Davidic Messiah. In this psalm, it is written:

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor....For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Ps. 89.19-29.

<sup>307</sup> See Fitzmyer, *One Who Is to Come*, 22.

<sup>308</sup> Ps. 89.38-45. If the destruction of the Temple is also implied in this Psalm (see Tate, *Psalms 51-100*; Frank Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005], 406), then here too, it seems that a connection between the Temple and the Davidic dynasty is implied, given that as a consequence of God's temporary rejection of the Davidic dynasty, Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed. In 1 Kings 9.1-9/2 Chr. 7.19-22, one finds in language similar to that of Ps. 89 a clear link between God's interruption of the Davidic dynasty and the destruction of the Temple.

<sup>309</sup> Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 222: 'Ps 72 is universally considered to be a royal psalm'. See also Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II, 51-100: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 17; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 179, who states that this psalm was likely used in coronation ceremonies for new kings.

<sup>310</sup> Ps. 72.1-4, 12-14.



These verses demonstrate quite clearly that the anointed Davidic king was expected to be a righteous leader and judge who will defend the cause of the poor and vulnerable.<sup>311</sup> The expectations for Davidic kings were thus clearly multifaceted.

#### *Prophetic Biblical Texts*

This multifaceted profile of the Davidic king is reinforced in the prophetic biblical texts that speak of him, where although he certainly is expected to redeem Israel, he is also expected to be a righteous judge and defender of the poor who has a significant link with the Temple. In Isa. 9.1-7 and 11.1-9, for example, one finds expectations for a Davidic king who will restore the fortunes of Israel, provide security against Israel's enemies, and rule over his kingdom,<sup>312</sup> but there is just as clear a picture of a Davidic king who will be a righteous judge and leader, one who will be on the side of the poor and vulnerable. The prophet states that the king's 'authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore'.<sup>313</sup> He also declares that the Davidic king will have 'a spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of God' and that 'he shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with

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<sup>311</sup> Fitzmyer, *One Who Is to Come*, 43, notes that this psalm 'extol[s] the qualities of the equitable rule of the kingly figure', which includes, 'his defense of the poor and afflicted among his people (vv. 12-14)'. See also Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 223. Many commentators note parallels between expectations in other ancient Near Eastern sources that envisage a king who would be a just ruler and favor the poor and this psalm's emphasis on a just and righteous king who favors the poor. See, e.g., Hans Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 77-78; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 110-111, esp. 111; J. J. M. Roberts, 'The Old Testament's Contribution to Messianic Expectations', in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010 [1992]), 43; Dahood, *Psalms II, 51-100*, 180; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 206-207, 211-218.

<sup>312</sup> On Isa. 9.1-7 and its expectation for a Davidic king who will deliver Israel, see Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), 162-167; Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 102-110; Laato, *A Star Is Rising*, 119. Fitzmyer, *One to Come*, 36-37, writes, 'God's activity in their deliverance is the main reason for the rejoicing of the people (vv. 2-4[3-4]), but their joy is further created by the birth of a king, who is to rule this people as God's agent and deliver them from oppression'.

<sup>313</sup> Isa. 9.6-7. Continuing his comments on Isa. 9.6-7, Fitzmyer, *One Who Is to Come*, 37, states, 'The stress in these verses is still on the activity of God, who through the royal figure that has been born will bring about the kind of human society that the prophet Isaiah has always been advocating, one marked by "justice and righteousness"'. See also Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 130.

righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth'.<sup>314</sup> Jeremiah similarly announces:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness'.<sup>315</sup>

The Davidic king will redeem and provide security for Judah and Israel, but he is also clearly a wise and righteous judge, executing justice in the land.<sup>316</sup> These are expectations that are very much in line with what one finds in the psalms.

It is also interesting to note the connection between the Davidic king and the Temple that appears to be present in some of the prophetic biblical texts. Jeremiah 33.17-18, for example, states: 'For thus says the Lord: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, and the levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt-offerings, to make grain-offerings, and to make sacrifices for all time'.<sup>317</sup> The Davidic dynasty and the restoration of, and continued activity in, the Temple appears here to be closely connected,<sup>318</sup> which is not surprising given the links between Davidic kings and the Temple observed above.

The book of Ezekiel likewise speaks of a future Davidic king whom God will raise up in the place of the kings who have failed to live up to their role, and although not much is said about this Davidic king in Ezekiel, it is noteworthy that here, too, an apparent link is made between the Temple and the Davidic king, despite 'a clear down-

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<sup>314</sup> Isa. 11.2-4. For this Davidic king as one who delivers the poor and vulnerable, see Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 158-159. See also, Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 25: 'Throughout the ancient Near East, the ideal king was envisaged as a shepherd, who would rule with wisdom and righteousness. The hope for such an ideal king was not necessarily confined to situations where there is no king at all'.

<sup>315</sup> Jer. 23.5-6

<sup>316</sup> See Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 177; Roberts, 'Old Testament's Contribution', 46.

<sup>317</sup> Jeremiah goes on in 33:19-22 to state. 'The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: Thus says the Lord: If any of you could break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night would not come at their appointed time, only then could my covenant with my servant David be broken, so that he would not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with my ministers the Levites. Just as the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will increase the offspring of my servant David, and the Levites who minister to me'.

<sup>318</sup> See Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 26-27; Laato, *A Star Is Rising*, 167

grading of the royal connection to the temple in the writings of this prophet'.<sup>319</sup> In Ezek. 37.24-28, God says:

My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. They shall live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, in which your ancestors lived; they and their children and their children's children shall live there forever; and my servant David shall be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them for evermore. My dwelling-place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them for evermore.

According to this passage, God will raise up the future Davidic king, and the 'seal of this new order will be set when the building of a new temple, the dwelling place of God, is complete'.<sup>320</sup> Although less explicit, what one finds here in Ezekiel, as well as above in Jeremiah 33, is likely tied to what Runnalls calls a pattern of 'mutual authentication', which was observed in 2 Sam 7.11-17.

Lastly, mention should be made of the link between the Davidic king and the Temple found in Zechariah. In Zechariah 3.8, one reads, 'Now listen, Joshua, high priest, you and your colleagues who sit before you! For they are an omen of things to come: I am going to bring my servant the Branch'. The 'Branch' here is likely an allusion to Jeremiah 23.5-6 and thus probably should be understood as referring to a Davidic king.<sup>321</sup> The explicit link between this Davidic king and the Temple is made a few chapters later in Zech. 6.12-13, where, as Collins observes, he is 'given a key role in the rebuilding of the temple'.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Runnalls, 'Messianic Typology', 22.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. Commenting on verse 26, Walther Eichrodt writes, 'The actual seal will, however, be sent on this new order when the building of the new temple in the midst of this grace-filled people has been completed' (*Ezekiel: A Commentary* [London: SCM Press, 1970], 514). Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48* (WBC 29; Waco: Word Books, 1990), 194, similarly states, 'In keeping with the context, the conception that dominates this final stanza [i.e., vss. 25b-28] is the echoing of the historical period of the united monarchy, which under David and Solomon was closely connected with the building of the Temple....Emphasis is laid on the restored temple towering over the people as the capstone of the new divine-human constitution that would not decay. It would be a material symbol to the world of the special relationship between God and the people consecrated to him'. See also Laato, *A Star Is Rising*, 168.

<sup>321</sup> Collins argues that for Zechariah, 'the hopes for such restoration [i.e., of the Davidic line] rested with Zerubbabel' (*Scepter and Star*, 30). See also Fitzmyer, *One Who Is to Come*, 51.

<sup>322</sup> Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 30. See also Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 194-196; Runnalls, 'Messianic Typology', 23; Rex Mason, 'The Messiah in the Postexilic Old Testament Literature', in *King and*

Thus says the LORD of hosts: Here is a man whose name is Branch: for he shall branch out in his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. It is he that shall build the temple of the LORD; he shall bear royal honour, and shall sit and rule on his throne’.

This link between the Davidic king and the Temple, particularly in terms of Temple-building/restoring activity has clear precedents in 2 Sam. 7.11-17<sup>323</sup> and thus reinforces the significant connection Davidic kings had with the Temple.<sup>324</sup>

#### *A Profile of the Davidic King*

From these biblical texts, one is able to construct a relatively clear picture of what was expected of a Davidic king, and this picture is relatively complex. He would either defend Israel from its enemies or redeem Israel if Israel fell into subjugation to enemies; he would be a righteous ruler and judge over both the people of Israel and its enemies, especially privileging the poor and the vulnerable; finally, a Davidic king would have a significant link to the Temple, one which was sometimes related to Temple-building/restoring activity. As one looks at the expectations for the Davidic Messiah found in the extra-biblical texts, one finds that these multifaceted expectations for Davidic kings influenced and shaped expectations for the Davidic Messiah.

#### *The Extra-Biblical Texts*

As noted above, probably the most significant text among the extra-biblical literature that refers to the Davidic Messiah is the Psalms of Solomon, particularly psalms 17 and 18. In this text, one finds that many of the expectations for Davidic kings are carried over to later Davidic messianic speculation. I quoted this text at length above, but it is so central to a discussion of Davidic messianic expectations that I feel it is worth quoting again in some detail:

Look, O Lord, and raise up for them their king, a son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time that you know, O God. Undergird him with the strength to destroy the

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*Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day (JSOTsup 270; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 343-349; Laato, *A Star Is Rising*, 201.

<sup>323</sup> As well as in Hezekiah and Josiah’s temple reforms. For a brief analysis of these reforms, see Runnalls, ‘Messianic Typology’, 25.

<sup>324</sup> Even if the ‘Branch’ in this text is not a Davidic king, he nevertheless appears to be a royal figure. This remains significant, for it affirms the connection between the king and the Temple, and because the Davidic kings were, obviously, kings, one can reasonably assume that he, like the royal figure of this text and other kings in the ancient Near East, would have a close connection with the Temple. In other words, even if not about a Davidic king, this text reinforces the connection between kings and the Temple that was a part of Israel’s royal history.

unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem from the Gentiles who trample her down to destruction; In wisdom and in righteousness to drive out the sinners from the inheritance; to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar; to demolish all their resources with an iron rod; to destroy the lawbreaking Gentiles with the word of his mouth; to scatter the Gentiles from his presence at his threat; to condemn sinners by their own consciences. He will gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness, and he will judge the tribes of the people who have been made holy by the Lord his God. He will not tolerate unrighteousness to dwell among them again, and no person who knows evil will live with them. For he will know them, because they are all children of their God..... He will judge peoples and nations in the wisdom of justice. He will have Gentile peoples serving him under his yoke, and he will glorify the Lord publically in the whole world. He will pronounce Jerusalem clean, consecrating it as it was in the beginning. He will have nations come from the ends of the earth to see his glory.....He will be a righteous king over them, taught by God, there will be no unrighteousness among them during his reign, because everyone will be holy, and their king will be the Lord Messiah. For he will not depend on cavalry and archers; Nor will he need to finance a war; He will not place his hope on making war. The Lord himself is his king, the hope of the one who hopes in God. He will be merciful to all the Gentiles that fearfully stand before him.....And he will not weaken during his reign, relying upon his God, because God will make him powerful by a holy spirit; and wise in intelligent counsel, with strength and righteousness. And the blessings of the Lord will be with him in strength, and it will not weaken.<sup>325</sup>

The Davidic messiah remains the topic of discussion in Pss. Sol. 18, where it is said:

O Lord, your mercy is upon the works of your hands forever, your kindness to Israel with a lavish gift. Your eyes are watching over them and none of them will be lacking. Your ears listen to the hopeful prayer of the poor....Happy are those living in those days, to see the good things of the Lord, that he will do for the coming generation; That will be under the rod of discipline of the Lord's Messiah, in the fear of his God, in the wisdom of the spirit, and in righteousness and strength, to direct people to righteous actions, in fear of God.<sup>326</sup>

Taken together, these psalms contain several biblical allusions, primarily to Isa. 11 and Ps. 2,<sup>327</sup> and describe the Davidic Messiah as both a mighty leader who will redeem Israel, as well as a righteous king and judge who will 'usher in an era of peace and reign in a kingdom marked by holiness and righteousness'.<sup>328</sup> It is also likely that the Davidic Messiah pictured here was expected, as the Davidic kings were, to be on the side of the poor and vulnerable.<sup>329</sup> Furthermore, it appears that there is a connection

<sup>325</sup> Pss. Sol. 17.21-25.

<sup>326</sup> Pss. Sol. 18.1-8.

<sup>327</sup> Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 54.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid. See also, Oegema, *Anointed and His People*, 104-10; Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 342-343.

<sup>329</sup> It seems to be implied that the poor will be lifted up in the time of, and perhaps by, the Davidic Messiah in Pss. Sol. 18.1-2, which is entitled 'A Psalm of Solomon About the Lord's Messiah' (ψαλμὸς τῷ Σαλωμων ἐν τοῦ χριστοῦ κυρίου): 'O Lord, your mercy is upon the works of your hands forever, your

established between the Davidic Messiah and the Temple in Pss. Sol. 17:30, where one reads that the Messiah ‘shall glorify the Lord in the mark of all the earth’.<sup>330</sup> Thus, in these two psalms alone one finds a relatively complex picture of the Davidic messianic role. The diverse nature of the Davidic messianic role found in the Psalms of Solomon is also present across the rest of the extra-biblical literature.

There are numerous mentions of the Davidic messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Most of these texts simply refer to the coming of the Davidic messiah alongside the Priestly messiah, and sometimes also a prophetic figure, rather than providing a picture of this messiah’s role; but other texts from Qumran, although very fragmentary, have allowed scholars to fill out the Davidic messianic role in more detail, and it is a role that is not at all unfamiliar to that encountered thus far.

Take, for example, 4Q161, which reads as follows:

[The interpretation of the word concerns the shoot] of David which will sprout [in the final days, since] [with the breath of his lips he will execute] his enemies and God will support him with [the spirit of] courage [...] [...] throne of glory, [holy] crown and hemmed vestments [...] in his hand. He will rule over all the peoples and Magog [...] his sword will judge all the peoples. And as for what he says: <<He will not [judge by appearances] or give verdicts on hearsay>>, its interpretation: [...] according to what they teach him, he will judge.<sup>331</sup>

This text is a peshar on Isaiah, and thus one is not surprised to find that the role of the Davidic Messiah in this text is in line with that of the Davidic king in Isaiah 11; the Branch (or ‘shoot’, as García Martínez translates it) of David in 4Q161 is expected to overthrow the oppressors of Israel and redeem the nation while also fulfilling the other functions explicitly quoted in Isa. 11, such as acting as a righteous judge.<sup>332</sup> Given the clear association in this text between the Davidic Messiah and the Davidic king of Isa.

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kindness to Israel with a lavish gift. Your eyes are watching over them and none of them will be lacking. Your ears listen to the hopeful prayer of the poor’. In light of the clear biblical expectations for a Davidic king who would favor the poor, it seems reasonable to conclude that in this text the Davidic Messiah was expected to have a prominent role in the lifting up the poor.

<sup>330</sup> The translation of this verse is from Kenneth Atkinson (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/31-pssal-nets.pdf>, accessed Nov., 2011). Commenting on this verse, Runnalls, ‘Messianic Typology’, 28, writes, ‘Here the restoration of the holiness of the Temple is plainly to be the work of the king’. See also Laato, *A Star Is Rising*, 282.

<sup>331</sup> 4Q161 3.18-25.

<sup>332</sup> See Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 57-58; Oegema, *Anointed and His People*, 90.

11, it is not unlikely that his role as judge would include favoring the poor and vulnerable as well.

In 4Q174 1.10-13, one finds another reference to the Branch of David. This part of the text acts as a commentary on 2 Sam 7.12-14 and reads:

This (refers to the) <<branch of David>>, who will arise with the Interpreter of the law who [will rise up] in Zi[on in] the last days as it is written: *Amos 9:11* <<I will raise up the hut of David which has fallen>>, This (refers to) <<the hut of David which is fallen>>, who will arise to save Israel.

One finds that this text, despite its 'rather minimal description of the role of the Branch of David', at least indicates that the Davidic Messiah 'has an active role in restoring the fortunes of Israel'.<sup>333</sup> Moreover, although the Davidic Messiah is not explicitly given the task of rebuilding/restoring the Temple, which is noteworthy given the biblical text being commented on, he is at least associated with the establishment of the Temple as it is presented in the text.<sup>334</sup>

4Q252, which is a commentary on Gen. 49.10, has yet another mention of the Branch of David:

A sovereign shall [not] be removed from the tribe of Judah. While Israel has the dominion, there will [not] lack someone who sits on the throne of David. For <<the staff>> is the covenant of royalty, [the thou]sands of Israel are <<the feet>>. Until the messiah of justice comes, the branch of David. For to him and to his descendants has been given the covenant of royalty over his people for all everlasting generations.

Here one finds not only the common expectation that the Davidic king was to rule over Israel, but also the hope for a just and righteous Davidic king.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 61. See also Oegema, *Anointed and His People*, 120-122; Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 336. If it does, in fact, speak of the Davidic Messiah, 4Q246 also indicates that he would be involved in the redemption of Israel. Collins offers strong evidence in favor of identifying the Son of God as the Davidic messiah, and Fitzmyer has not, in my view at least, offered a convincing rebuttal (Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 163-164; Fitzmyer, *One Who Is to Come*, 104-106). The reason I have not discussed this text in the body of this study is that, even if it is about the Davidic Messiah, it does not add a great deal to the picture of the Davidic Messiah that will be developed from the Qumran texts. The Davidic Messiah here is still understood to be a militant leader who will bring about an era of peace after his victory over Israel's oppressors and the redemption of Israel (see 4Q246 2.1-8). Instead, the importance of this text lies in its use of 'Son of God' as a possible designation for the Davidic Messiah. This, however, is not significant for my study.

<sup>334</sup> John A. Dennis, *Jesus' Death and the Gathering of True Israel* (WUNT 2.217; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 163; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 483n20.

<sup>335</sup> See Oegema, *Anointed and His People*, 119-120.

One final text from the Dead Sea Scrolls, 4Q521, is particularly noteworthy, as it is probably the most detailed text from Qumran that speaks of the Davidic (?) Messiah.<sup>336</sup>

In this text one reads:

[for the heav]ens and the earth will listen to his Messiah, [and all] that is in them will not turn away from the holy precepts. Be encouraged, you who are seeking the Lord in his service! Will you not, perhaps, encounter the Lord in it, all those who hope in their heart? For the Lord will observe the devout, and call the just by name, and upon the poor he will place his spirit, and the faithful he will renew with his strength. For he will honour the devout upon the throne of eternal royalty, freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twisted. Ever shall I cling to those who hope. In his mercy he will jud[ge,] and from no-one shall the fruit [of] good [deeds] be delayed, and the Lord will perform marvelous acts such as have not existed, just as he sa[id] for he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live, he will proclaim good news to the meek, give lavishly [to the need]y, lead the exiled and enrich the hungry. [...] and all [...].

One finds here a Davidic (?) Messiah whose role is in many ways consistent with that of biblical Davidic kings. He commands authority, acts as a righteous and just leader, and is on the side of the poor and vulnerable. Interestingly, however, there is no explicit expectation in this text for a militant Davidic Messiah.

Taken together, these texts from Qumran contain a multifaceted picture of the Davidic Messiah. He is a leading figure in the redemption of Israel; he is a just and righteous king who will favor the poor; and there is an association, though not a strong one, made between him and the Temple.<sup>337</sup>

### *Historical Davidic Messianic Figures*

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<sup>336</sup> It does not seem possible as of yet to identify with certainty the messiah of 4Q521 (See the discussion in Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 251-254). The Davidic messianic identification is certainly possible (see, e.g., Florentino García Martínez, 'Messianic Hopes in the Qumran Writings', in *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Writings, Beliefs, and Practices*, eds. Florentino García Martínez and Julio Trebolle Barrera, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson [Leiden: Brill, 1995], 168-170; Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 252). The Messiah's authority over the heavens and earth, the emphasis on restoring justice, and the favor that falls upon the poor and vulnerable can be understood as being in line with Israel's (and the ancient Near East's as well) royal ideology in general and Davidic messianism in particular. Even the reference to Isa. 61:1-3 in this text may be interpreted royally, given that the historical Davidic Messiah Simon bar Giora is said to have preached a message quite similar to these verses. At the least, it seems this messianic figure in 4Q521 has traits of both a royal and prophetic figure.

<sup>337</sup> It is not quite so surprising that the Davidic Messiah is not explicitly linked to the Temple given that part of the reason for the presence of two Messiahs at Qumran was to delineate clearly the royal and priestly roles, the former being related to the protection and governing of the people and the latter being related to the Temple activities, that had been combined by Hasmonean rulers (see, John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* [London: Routledge, 1997], 76, 79).



In addition to the biblical and extra-biblical texts, it is worth looking at the historical Davidic messianic figures discussed above one final time.<sup>338</sup> These movements appear to demonstrate that the same biblical paradigms that shaped the Davidic messianic expectations found in the texts discussed above also influenced the wider population that did not or could not leave texts behind.<sup>339</sup> Not surprisingly, then, the nature of these Davidic messianic figures' roles is just as multifaceted as that of the biblical Davidic kings and the Davidic Messiah of the extra-biblical texts.<sup>340</sup>

In the career of Simon of Perea, one finds clear evidence of an historical Davidic messianic figure who acted as a would-be redeemer of Israel. Simon not only 'burnt down the royal palace at Jericho and many other stately mansions', but he also 'set fire to many other royal residences in many parts of the country and utterly destroyed them after permitting his fellow-rebels to take as booty whatever had been left in them'.<sup>341</sup> Josephus also tells his readers that Simon would have continued his military campaigns had he not been defeated and killed by the Romans.<sup>342</sup> Simon's role as Israel's liberator thus comes through clearly.

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<sup>338</sup> Because I have already quoted the accounts of these figures at length above, I will attempt here to keep my quotations as concise as possible so as not to be redundant. Furthermore, I will revert this time to discussing these figures, as far as possible, in chronological order.

<sup>339</sup> Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, xvi-xvii, emphasize that understanding historical movements are just as important as understanding texts. Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 196, makes a similar point. Ironically, though, our only sources for these leaders and movements are from a person of the literate class, Josephus. Worse still, he is notoriously biased in his descriptions of these Davidic messianic figures. Nevertheless, there is still valuable information to be gleaned from his accounts of these figures.

<sup>340</sup> Interestingly, Herod appears to have attempted to cement his position as king of the Jews by engaging in temple-building/restoring activity (Runnalls, 'Messianic Typology', 28-29; Samuel Rocca, *Herod's Judaea: A Mediterranean State in the Classical World* [TSAJ 122; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 25-27). Runnalls notes that this 'may point to the possibility that Herod saw himself as the legitimate successor to David's kingdom and even exploited the imagery of the Davidic messiah to try to keep his Jewish subjects in control' (Runnalls, 'Messianic Typology', 29). Freyne, 'The Herodian Period', 32-35, appears to suggest that although not 'messianic', Herod's actions in restoring the Temple were probably royal.

<sup>341</sup> *Ant.* 17.274.

<sup>342</sup> *Ant.* 17.265: 'And he would have done something still more serious if attention had not quickly been turned to him. For Gratus, the officer of the royal troops, joined the Romans and with what forces he had went to meet Simon. A long and heavy battle was fought between them, and most of the Peraeans, who were disorganized and fighting with more recklessness than science, were destroyed. As for Simon, he tried to save himself by fleeing through a ravine, but Gratus intercepted him and cut off his head'.

Athronges, too, was a Davidic messianic figure fighting for the redemption of Israel. He engaged in various military campaigns against the Romans, appointed his four brothers ‘as generals and satraps for his raids’, and, as king, engaged in ‘raiding expeditions throughout the country with his brothers’ with the ‘principle object of ‘kill[ing] Romans and royalists’.<sup>343</sup> Thus, Athronges’s career provides another instance of an historical Davidic messianic figure who, in his role as Davidic Messiah, fought to liberate Israel.<sup>344</sup>

One should not conclude, however, that the redemption of Israel is the only aspect of the Davidic messianic role that is evident in the historical Davidic messianic figures I am considering here. To the contrary, there is good reason to believe that there was much more to their role as Davidic Messiahs. The career of Menahem appears to illustrate this quite clearly. As observed above, Menahem’s role as Davidic Messiah did, indeed, include fighting for the liberation of Israel. He ‘took his intimate friends off with him to Masada, where he broke into king Herod’s armoury and provided arms both for his fellow-townsmen and for other brigands’, and subsequently, having made use of them as ‘his bodyguard, he returned like a veritable king to Jerusalem became the leader of the revolution, and directed the siege of the palace’.<sup>345</sup> However, Menahem also attempted to establish a link with, if not overtly exert his authority over, the Temple. Josephus describes how Menahem ‘had gone up [to the Temple] in a state to pay his devotions, arrayed in royal robes and attended by his suite of armed fanatics’.<sup>346</sup> This appearance in royal garments in the Temple is significant. Horsley’s description of this event and its meaning is worth quoting again: ‘Menahem was posturing as the divinely elected king, being recognized as such by his “fanatical” followers....he and his

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<sup>343</sup> *J.W.* 2.61-62.

<sup>344</sup> It cannot be assumed, however, that this was the only significant aspect of Simon and Anthronges’s careers as Davidic messianic figures. They might have engaged in other sorts of Davidic messianic behavior, as other Davidic messianic figures like Menahem or Simon bar Giora had. However, their roles as would-be redeemers are the only ones for which one has evidence.

<sup>345</sup> *J.W.* 2.434.

<sup>346</sup> *J.W.* 2.444.

followers were giving ceremonial expression to his office in the Temple'.<sup>347</sup> Thus, in this account one finds that the link between the Davidic king and the Temple in Jerusalem that had been established early on in Israel's history was likewise forged by an historical Davidic messianic figure.

Simon bar Giora's role is the most complex of the historical Davidic messianic figures that will be discussed here. One finds that he fought for the liberation of Israel, and, as noted above, his military campaigns are even described as having 'striking Davidic feature[s]'.<sup>348</sup> More significant here, however, is Josephus's claim that Simon 'proclaimed liberty for slaves and rewards for the free'.<sup>349</sup> As Horsley observes, Simon's campaign appears to have had as one of its goals 'social and economic justice', and such 'equity for the meek and justice for the poor were central to the program of the future anointed king, the righteous branch of David, at least according to prophecies such as Isaiah 11 and Jer 23:5 (cf. Jer 34:8-9)'.<sup>350</sup> Lastly, like Menahem, Simon appears to have established a connection between himself and the Temple. When it was clear that the Romans would defeat him and his movement, Simon, having been hiding, emerged dressed in white tunics and a purple mantle and 'arose out of the ground at the very spot whereon the Temple formerly stood'.<sup>351</sup> Although one cannot be certain as to Simon's intentions in doing this, it is difficult to believe that the location of his action was without significance.<sup>352</sup> The picture of the Davidic messianic role that emerges from Simon bar Giora's career is one that is clearly as multifaceted as that of the biblical Davidic kings and extra-biblical Davidic Messiahs. He had a leading role in the attempted redemption of Israel; he sought economic and social justice; and he appears to have linked his royal status to the Temple.

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<sup>347</sup> Horsley, 'Popular Messianic Movements', 488. See also Wright, *Victory of God*, 483: 'Menahem, one of the would-be messiahs of the War period, appeared in the Temple in royal robes, as though to signal the long-awaited coming of divine deliverance'.

<sup>348</sup> Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 122.

<sup>349</sup> *J.W.* 4.508.

<sup>350</sup> Horsley, 'Popular Messianic Movements', 490.

<sup>351</sup> *J.W.* 7.29-31.

<sup>352</sup> Although the Temple was no longer there, it seems that his choice was not simply an arbitrary one. Horsley notes the 'ceremonious and symbolic' nature of Simon's surrender ('Popular Messianic Movements', 491), and both he and Hengel suggest that in surrendering in the manner he did, Simon might have been seeking to bring about some sort of divine intervention (Horsley, 'Popular Messianic Movements', 491; Hengel, *Zealots*, 297).

The last historical Davidic messianic figure to be considered here is the ‘principal leader of the second Jewish rebellion against Rome’, Simon ben Kosiba.<sup>353</sup> As illustrated above, it is likely that as the Davidic Messiah, Simon acted as the leading figure in the fight for Israel’s liberation. This seems to be confirmed by the coins that he minted, some of which marked the years ‘of the freedom of Israel’.<sup>354</sup> Furthermore, there is evidence that Simon possibly had ambitions to rebuild the Temple, as there are coins that were minted by Simon which depict the Temple standing with a star overhead.<sup>355</sup> If this is the case, then one has yet another instance of an historical Davidic messianic figure establishing a link with the Temple.

#### *Summarizing Davidic Messianic Behavior*

Taking all of this into consideration, I believe that one is able to put together a relatively solid profile of the Davidic Messiah, thus allowing one to determine what Davidic messianic behavior would likely entail.<sup>356</sup> A Davidic Messiah would have a significant role in the redemption of Israel; he was expect to be enthroned in a kingdom, ruling over the people of Israel; he would be a righteous and just leader, one whose favor would fall on the poor and vulnerable; and he would establish in some way a link with the Temple.

What immediately becomes apparent is that the Davidic messianic role is one that is complex. It is not defined solely by the expectation that the Davidic Messiah would redeem Israel by means of an earthly military battle. Instead, it seems clear that there could be many reasons why a figure might be considered a Davidic Messiah without yet having engaged in an earthly military battle aimed at the redemption of Israel; in fact, I would argue that if one fully appreciates the extent of the messianic and

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<sup>353</sup> Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 70.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid. See also Wright, *Victory of God*, 483: ‘Bar-Kochba...gave the rebuilding of the Temple such a high priority that he had it stamped on his coins’; Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 199-200: ‘The image of the Temple probably indicates the hope of rebuilding the Temple....Given that Simon was called *bar kochba* and given that his name also appears on coins that bear the image of the Temple, the star emblem is probably meant to allude to his title, “Son of the Star,” and may also imply that Simon hoped to rebuild the Temple’.

<sup>356</sup> I should emphasize that because of the limited sources, there is no way to determine how much more might be a part of the Davidic messianic role. The Davidic messianic behavior that I describe now is simply a baseline that one can establish from the limited sources.

eschatological category mixing around the time of Jesus that I discussed above, it becomes clear that one could be considered a Davidic Messiah without *ever* aiming to engage in an earthly battle with Israel's enemies.<sup>357</sup>

### *The Significance of a Davidic Messianic Profile*

The purpose of offering this multifaceted profile of the Davidic Messiah and emphasizing the diverse nature of messianic and eschatological expectations is to demonstrate that determining whether Jesus' behavior was in line with the Davidic messianic role is not as one dimensional as recent research on the Davidic messianic question seems to have made it out to be; it is not as easy as looking for earthly military ambitions on the part of Jesus. Rather, determining whether Jesus' behavior was in line with the Davidic messianic role requires one to look at various aspects of Jesus' ministry. This is precisely what I intend to do later on in this study. For now, however, all that remains for me to do is to summarize why I believe my fresh approach is one that is worth pursuing.

### **3.5 Putting It All Together**

In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate that the fresh approach that I am taking up in this study, i.e., the things that I will be focusing on and looking for in an effort to determine whether Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure, is both relevant and valuable for the scholar attempting to answer the Davidic messianic question. Anthropological and cultural studies seem to suggest that focusing on how significant others like the Twelve viewed Jesus would be very helpful for determining what role Jesus was taking up during his ministry. Moreover, even if we set aside these findings, understanding how the Twelve viewed Jesus remains important, for, if they viewed him as the Davidic Messiah during his ministry, then this itself could offer quite a strong basis on which to answer the Davidic messianic question. Furthermore, understanding how Jesus behaved in the context of the Twelve's view of him, i.e., understanding the interplay between Jesus and these significant others, is of great importance, as it was on the basis of just such an interplay that Davidic kings and Davidic Messiahs were made.

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<sup>357</sup> See again my discussion in 2.3 above.

Having justified my approach here, I will attempt to employ it in the chapters that follow. I will first look at the Twelve's view of Jesus, arguing that they saw him early on and throughout his ministry as the Davidic Messiah. I will then turn my attention to how Jesus behaved in light of this view, arguing that throughout the time that he was viewed as the Davidic Messiah, he was doing and saying things that were in line with this view, i.e., in line with the Davidic messianic role. I will, finally, argue that the best explanation for this interplay between Jesus and the Twelve is that he was a Davidic messianic figure, i.e., that he was taking up the role of Davidic Messiah.

## **PART 2**

### ***The Making of Jesus the Davidic Messiah***

*This man, having been lifted up amidst the unsettled conditions of affairs, was bold enough to act like a king [lit. ‘to put on the diadem’], and having brought together a number of people, he was proclaimed king by them in their madness.*

– Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 17.273-274

## **Chapter 4**

## ***Preliminary and Methodological Issues***

### **4.1 Sources**

In order to answer the Davidic messianic question, I obviously need sources from which I can glean historical information about Jesus. There is widespread disagreement, however, about the nature and value of the sources that scholars have employed in their research on the historical Jesus. With regard to the four canonical Gospels alone, there are debates concerning their dates, their relationship to one another, and the nature of each.<sup>358</sup> Throw into the discussion the Q material<sup>359</sup> and apocryphal gospels<sup>360</sup> and one has the recipe for an endless debate. Thankfully, for the purposes of this study the sources issue is relatively straightforward. As explained earlier, my approach to the Davidic messianic question will depend largely on establishing whether the Twelve viewed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah in the pre-Easter period. In my research, I have found that it is the Synoptics and John that serve as the only reliable sources for determining this.<sup>361</sup> Furthermore, because I will not argue for a particular interpretation of Jesus' words and deeds, the sources outside of the canonical Gospels become far less

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<sup>358</sup> The standard commentaries make this abundantly clear. See, e.g., W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 26; New York: Doubleday, 1971), xxxvii-xlviii; William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew: Introduction and commentary on Matthew I-VII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 58-138; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, trans. James E. Crouch (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 1-22, 58-59; Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 25-56; Collins, *Mark*, 11-43, 94-95; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (AB 28; New York: Doubleday, 1981) 53-57, 63-106, 143-270; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (AB 29; London: G. Chapman, 1966), xlv-xlvii; Maurice Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?* (New York: Routledge, 1996); C. H. Dodd, *Historical Traditions in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

<sup>359</sup> See A. M. Farrer, 'On Dispensing with Q', in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955): 55-88; Michael Goulder, 'Is Q a Juggernaut?', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 667-681; Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996); John S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000); Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001).

<sup>360</sup> See John Dominic Crossan, *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of Canon* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985); Christopher M. Tuckett, 'Thomas and the Synoptics', *Novum Testamentum* 30 (1988): 132-157; Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM, 1990); Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 1, 114-141.

<sup>361</sup> Even Q is not of much help here.



valuable for this study than they might otherwise be.<sup>362</sup> Finally, the nature of my argument, even my arguments about individual traditions in the sources, is such that it would play out in largely the same manner even if the current consensus views concerning the sources change.<sup>363</sup> So, for example, my conclusion that Jesus was crucified as ‘the King of the Jews’ or that he chose an inner circle of twelve disciples does not rely very heavily on any particular view of our sources, but instead is deemed probable based on other considerations.

Therefore, the sources that I will be employing throughout my work are primarily the Synoptics, including the Q material,<sup>364</sup> with the Gospel of John being used in only a few instances. Given what I have set out to do in this study and the way I go about reaching my historical conclusions, I think that this is quite reasonable.

## **4.2 The Criteria of Authenticity**

Once one has established what sources will be used, one must decide how one will glean historical information from those sources, and for decades now scholars have utilized in one way or another the so-called ‘criteria of authenticity’ to this end.<sup>365</sup> Yet, anyone who is familiar with historical Jesus studies is likely aware of the ongoing criticisms of the criteria. The intensity of these criticisms has grown stronger in recent years by way of two publications that have built on the decades of work that has preceded them, and it is primarily with these publications that I will interact here. The first is Dale Allison’s ‘How to Marginalize the Traditional Criteria of Authenticity’, published in the first volume of the four-volume series *Handbook for the Study of the*

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<sup>362</sup> These sources are generally utilized in order to argue for particular interpretations of Jesus’ words or actions that are also found in the canonical sources. See, e.g., Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 265-302; John S. Kloppenborg, ‘Sources, Methods and Discursive Locations in the Quest of the Historical Jesus’, in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *How to Study the Historical Jesus*, eds. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 241-290. Even Q’s role in my study is diminished, for it will primarily be used to serve as evidence of possible multiple attestation of a tradition rather than for interpreting Jesus’ sayings. For Q’s role in a scholar’s interpretation of Jesus’ ministry, see Douglas E. Oakman, *The Political Aims of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 67-111.

<sup>363</sup> So, e.g., Q’s existence is not of great importance, nor is a particular solution to the Synoptic problem essential.

<sup>364</sup> The belief that at least these sources contain valuable historical information seems beyond dispute. I am unaware of any comprehensive study that does not in some way utilize these sources, even if others are utilized as well.

<sup>365</sup> As I will note below, there are numerous methodologies in which any number of the criteria might play a role.

*Historical Jesus*.<sup>366</sup> The second is *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity*,<sup>367</sup> a collection of essays published by editors Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne. These works argue that use of the criteria should be abandoned and that it is only by doing so that historical Jesus studies can proceed effectively. I, however, would disagree.

The criticisms offered in these works should, in my view, cause us to question whether the terminology that has been employed ('criterion', 'criteria') is more detrimental than helpful,<sup>368</sup> and they certainly should cause scholars to consider more carefully what historical work should and should not involve. However, I do not believe that they provide good grounds for abandoning the data<sup>369</sup> that have come to be known as the 'criteria of authenticity', e.g., multiple attestation or embarrassment.

#### 4.2.1 The Criticisms of the Criteria

In order to demonstrate this, I begin with a look at the various criticisms of the criteria.<sup>370</sup> Rather than review all of the criticisms of each of the criteria,<sup>371</sup> I will instead simply divide them into four groups.

The first group of criticisms calls into question a particular historical methodology, and more specifically the premises underlying it, in which the criteria were often used. This sort of historical methodology generally is said to follow a three-

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<sup>366</sup> Dale C. Allison, 'How To Marginalize the Traditional Criteria of Authenticity', in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *How to Study the Historical Jesus*, eds. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 3-30.

<sup>367</sup> *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity*, eds. Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne (London: T&T Clark, 2012).

<sup>368</sup> Questioning the usefulness of this terminology is not something that is new. See, e.g., Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 86; Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Ein Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung* (WUNT 2.7; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 86-87.

<sup>369</sup> The term 'data' is often used for a verse or tradition found in the sources. I use it here and throughout this section simply to refer to the information about any given tradition or theme found in the sources, e.g., its multiple attestation, embarrassment, etc.

<sup>370</sup> For the sake of space, I will not review the numerous criteria that are available for use. There are countless of these reviews that have been produced over the past 50 years, and there is nothing more that I can add to them. For a few recent reviews of the standard criteria, see Porter, *Criteria For Authenticity*, 63-102; Meier, 'Basic Methodology', 307-331; Webb, 'Historical Enterprise', 60-75. Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 63n1, and Meier, 'Basic Methodology', 309n49, offer extensive bibliographies of work on the criteria.

<sup>371</sup> For a review of the various criticisms leveled against the each of the traditional criteria, see Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 69-99; Robert H. Stein, 'The "Criteria" for Authenticity', in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 1, *Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, eds. Richard T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 229-251; Neil J. McEleney, 'Authenticating Criteria and Mark 7:1-23', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 (1972), 432-448.

step process: (1) isolate any given tradition about Jesus and find the (most) original form of that tradition, one free from the later theologizing of the early church, (2) determine if the tradition does, indeed, originate with Jesus, i.e., if it is authentic, and (3) construct a portrait of the historical Jesus based on any number of these authentic traditions.<sup>372</sup> Not only is this approach to studying Jesus open to abuse without further methodological clarity,<sup>373</sup> but the premises underlying each step of this approach are believed by many scholars to be significantly problematic. There are those who point out, for example, that attempts to discover an original form of a tradition are based on the flawed premise that there at some point existed an original, uninterpreted form of any tradition that is free from the later theologizing of the early church.<sup>374</sup> Similarly, it is argued that the desire to authenticate traditions, although well intentioned, has stemmed from a flawed assumption that traditions can be grouped into the distinct categories of ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’.<sup>375</sup> This assumption, however, overlooks the fact that there is not a ‘clear distinction between an authentic item and an inauthentic item’, but instead only ‘a mixed product, that is, a product of Jesus and the church’.<sup>376</sup> Lastly, it is argued that the approach that focuses on constructing a picture of Jesus based on individual, authenticated traditions wrongly ‘privileges the part over the whole’, whereas the whole

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<sup>372</sup> See Chris Keith, ‘The Indebtedness of the Criteria Approach to Form Criticism and Recent Attempts to Rehabilitate the Search for an Authentic Jesus’, in *Jesus, the Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity*, eds. Anthony Le Donne and Chris Keith (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 31-37; idem, ‘Memory and Authenticity: Jesus Tradition and What Really Happened’, *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 102 (2011), 163. Keith appears to imply that the criteria were specifically developed for such work and are therefore inextricably bound to this sort of historical methodology. I argue against this below.

<sup>373</sup> Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 43, cautions that one following such a process could fall prey to ‘the strategy of the fearless detective, which has four operative principles: (1) Any given sentence in the gospels may be taken to reflect fact. (2) The fact is separable from its sense in the gospel’s own context. (3) It acquires a new sense from a context established by the detective, who fearlessly correlates a selection of such facts. (4) Nothing in the gospels that contradicts the new correlation may be taken to reflect fact’. See also Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 4-5.

<sup>374</sup> See, e.g., Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 125-136; Keith, ‘Indebtedness’, 37-40; Allison, ‘How to Marginalize’, 13.

<sup>375</sup> Allison, ‘How to Marginalize’, 21.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 13. See also Morna D. Hooker, ‘Christology and Methodology’, *New Testament Studies* 17 (1970), 485-486; James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (London: SPCK, 2005), 30. Schröter, ‘The Criteria of Authenticity’, 59-70, emphasizes that one should not attempt to get behind these interpretations, but take account of them in one’s historical representation of the past. One could even argue that those traditions that are perhaps inauthentic could play just as important a role in drawing historical conclusions about Jesus as the authentic traditions.

is perhaps even more important than the part.<sup>377</sup> In the end, then, or so it is argued, if the historical methodology for which the criteria were most often employed is significantly flawed, then any use of the criteria remains problematic as well, despite considerable attempts to ‘rehabilitate’ them.<sup>378</sup>

A second group of criticisms focuses on the failure of the criteria to do what many had hoped that they would do. The criteria, for example, have failed to provide scholars with the ability to draw secure historical conclusions about Jesus.<sup>379</sup> As Allison puts it:

It is the fragmentary and imperfect nature of the evidence as well as the limitations of our historical-critical tools that should move us to confess, if we are conscientious, how hard it is to recover the past. That something happened does not entail our ability to show it happened, and that something did not happen does not entail our ability to show that it did not happen. *I emphasize this assertion, obvious and trite, because too often those who wield the criteria come to definite conclusions.*<sup>380</sup>

Allison contrasts such work with his own, which often ends in anything but a definite conclusion. He observes that time and time again he has ‘looked at a complex and weighed the arguments on both sides – and there are almost always arguments pro and con, indeed good arguments pro and con – and been unable to come up with more than: Well, Jesus could have said it, but it might also come from the church’.<sup>381</sup> After offering a few examples of such ‘complexes’, Allison concludes, ‘my experience has taught me that applying our criteria to the various units leaves us uncertain about most of the material we are dealing with’.<sup>382</sup> This is certainly not the situation into which the criteria are supposed to have led scholars.

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<sup>377</sup> Allison, ‘How to Marginalize’, 21. See also Allison’s *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (London: SPCK, 2010), 1-30.

<sup>378</sup> Keith, ‘Indebtedness’, 40-47.

<sup>379</sup> Dissimilarity in particular was believed to be a criterion that would deliver assured results. See Nils A. Dahl, ‘The Problem of the Historical Jesus’, in *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. Donald H. Juel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 97.

<sup>380</sup> Allison, ‘How To Marginalize’, 10 (my emphasis). Even when Allison had employed the criteria in his earlier work, he was still wary of any notion that they might offer a path to some sort of historical certainty (see e.g., his *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998], 7). See also Hooker, ‘Christology and Methodology’, 485-486, who calls for ‘less dogmatism in our conclusions, and the recognition that all our results are only tentative’; Rodríguez, ‘Authenticating Criteria’, 166-167.

<sup>381</sup> Allison, ‘How To Marginalize’, 10.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

Allison also notes how the criteria failed to deliver on what seemed to be a promise of objective results that would lead to a scholarly consensus, and he points to the ‘diverse conclusions’ of various historical Jesus scholars who utilize the criteria as evidence of this.<sup>383</sup> These diverse conclusions themselves do not appear to bother Allison. As he says, ‘I do not think that we are scientists, and I do not expect consensus on any large matter within the humanities’.<sup>384</sup> ‘The point here, however’, Allison continues, ‘is that our criteria, which we employ to help take us a bit beyond our subjectivity, so that we might be more like those in the so-called hard sciences, do not appear to bring any uniformity of results, or any more uniformity of result than would have been the case had we never heard of them’.<sup>385</sup> Of course, as Allison also goes on to note, the reason why there can be such a variety among scholars using the same ‘tools’, i.e., the criteria, is because ‘our criteria are often in conflict’.<sup>386</sup> So, for example, not only do the criteria seem to result in conflicting historical judgments when applied to the same tradition,<sup>387</sup> but a portrait of Jesus based on one criterion might well look very different than a portrait of Jesus based on a different criterion.<sup>388</sup> Thus, rather than being a check on subjectivity and bringing about a consensus, Allison observes that the criteria have been used to reach a variety of conclusions about the historical Jesus.<sup>389</sup> In fact, Allison notes that the criteria can be used to reach just about any conclusion any given scholar desires.<sup>390</sup> The criteria have therefore failed terribly in bringing about the objectivity and consensus that they were supposed to have delivered.

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<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 12. Although he relies heavily on the criterion of multiple attestation, J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, xxviii, likewise acknowledges that the ‘problem of multiple and discordant conclusions forces us back to questions of theory and method’.

<sup>384</sup> Allison, ‘How To Marginalize’, 12.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid. See also Eric Eve, ‘Meier, Miracle and Multiple Attestation’, *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 3.1 (2005), 23; Rafael Rodríguez, ‘Authenticating Criteria: The Use and Misuse of a Critical Method’, *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 7.2 (2009), 154-158.

<sup>386</sup> Allison, ‘How To Marginalize’, 12-13.

<sup>387</sup> See Allison, ‘How to Marginalize’, 12-13 for several examples.

<sup>388</sup> A dissimilar Jesus, for example, might look quite different from a plausible Jesus, and an embarrassing Jesus might look quite different than a multiply attested Jesus.

<sup>389</sup> Allison, ‘How to Marginalize’, 12. On this same page he observes, ‘Dissimilarity, multiple attestation, coherence, and embarrassment have been used to concoct many different sorts of figures [i.e., portraits of Jesus]’.

<sup>390</sup> Allison, ‘How to Marginalize’, 18-21. See also, Jens Schröter, ‘The Criteria of Authenticity in Jesus Research and Historiographical Method’, in *Jesus, the Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity*, eds. Chris

A third group of criticisms questions the validity of a number of the criteria of authenticity. Morna Hooker's articles discussing the criteria of dissimilarity are probably the most famous examples of a scholar questioning the validity of one or more of the criteria.<sup>391</sup> As is well known today, Hooker challenged the validity of the criterion of dissimilarity because of the lack of comprehensive knowledge about Second Temple Judaism and the early church; in other words, how can one say something is dissimilar and use dissimilarity as a criterion if one does not know the full range of beliefs among Second Temple Jews and early Christians? The criterion of dissimilarity, and the criterion of coherence along with it, is also a highly subjective criterion, i.e., it relies on a specific interpretation of any given passage.<sup>392</sup> Thus, one interpretation of a saying or action of Jesus might demonstrate its dissimilarity to Judaism and/or early Christianity, whereas another scholar's interpretation of the same saying or action might demonstrate the exact opposite. Moreover, even if there is agreement on an interpretation, one scholar might consider that tradition to be dissimilar while another scholar might not.

The validity of the criteria of multiple attestation and embarrassment, which appear to be more commonly used today than dissimilarity, has likewise been questioned. Multiple attestation, for example, tends to rely on a particular view of the relationship between the canonical Gospels, a question that, for many, has yet to receive clear and definitive answers, thus making it a rather shaky foundation on which to establish a criterion.<sup>393</sup> Even the validity of the criterion of embarrassment, which perhaps more than any other appeals to common sense, has been called into question for reasons similar to those that caused the criterion of dissimilarity to fall out of favor with

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Keith and Anthony Le Donne (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 59, who warns that 'it is the danger of the "criteria approach" to present itself as a quasi-objective instrument for the evaluation of sources, whereas, in fact, it disguises the real decisions in the background'; Rodríguez, 'Authenticating Criteria', 157-158, 164-165.

<sup>391</sup> Hooker, 'Christology and Methodology': 480-487; Idem., 'On Using the Wrong Tool', *Theology* 75 (1972): 570-581.

<sup>392</sup> Hooker, 'Christology and Methodology', 482; Idem., 'Wrong Tool', 576-577.

<sup>393</sup> See, e.g., Mark Goodacre, 'Criticizing the Criterion of Multiple Attestation: The Historical Jesus and the Question of the Sources', in *Jesus, the Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity*, eds. Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne (London: T&T Clark, 2012): 152-169; McEleney, 'Authenticating Criteria', 434; Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 87-89.

scholars, namely, the lack of comprehensive knowledge of early Christianity.<sup>394</sup> Rafael Rodríguez, for example, notes that a tradition's embarrassing nature is not as obvious as some might suggest, and he gives several examples of how it is that traditions that are often said to be embarrassing might not have always been so for some early Christians.<sup>395</sup> Jesus' baptism is one such example. Most scholars believe that Jesus was, indeed, baptized by John the Baptist in large part because of the tradition's embarrassment.<sup>396</sup> However, Rodríguez draws attention to William Arnal, who suggests that 'there may indeed have been a time when Christians would have had something to gain by inventing the story of the baptism',<sup>397</sup> and who also posits that perhaps the 'association of the lesser-known Jesus with the prestigious prophetic figure, John, *enhanced* the former's reputation, at least until it didn't anymore'.<sup>398</sup> The embarrassing nature of a tradition is therefore perhaps not as obvious as some assume.<sup>399</sup> If the criteria lack validity, then it would obviously be problematic to continue to use them in historical Jesus research.

A fourth and final group of criticisms, closely related to the third, would seem to indicate that even if all the criteria were fulfilled, it would involve flawed logic to reason that whatever tradition has fulfilled them is therefore more likely to be authentic. There is no better formulation of this criticism than Allison's imaginary case study of the fictional Christian prophetess Faustina and the traditions that originated with her.<sup>400</sup> Allison notes how it is possible that a saying in the Jesus tradition that fulfills the criteria

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<sup>394</sup> Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 109-110; Allison, 'How To Marginalize', 5-7; Rafael Rodríguez, 'The Embarrassing Truth About Jesus: The Criterion of Embarrassment and the Failure of Historical Authenticity', in *Jesus, the Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity*, eds. Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne (London: T&T Clark, 2012): 132-151.

<sup>395</sup> Rodríguez, 'The Embarrassing Truth', 138-144.

<sup>396</sup> See, e.g., Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 1, 168-169.

<sup>397</sup> Rodríguez, 'Embarrassing Truth', 142, quoting Arnal, 'Major Episodes', 204.

<sup>398</sup> Rodríguez, 'Embarrassing Truth', 143 (emphasis original).

<sup>399</sup> It should be made clear that Rodríguez does not take this position himself, but is instead simply attempting to demonstrate what arguments *could* be made. Ultimately, though, this seems to me to undermine significantly the call to abandon this criterion. He does not accept the 'revisionist reconstructions' to which he draws attention, and this is precisely because when properly used as a datum and not as a simplistic criterion, the 'criterion' of embarrassment does, contrary to Rodríguez's claim ('Embarrassing Truth', 146), enable us to know about the historical Jesus. The responsible use of the 'criterion' of embarrassment will be illustrated shortly.

<sup>400</sup> Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 7-10.

of multiple attestation, Aramaic traces, Palestinian environment, dissimilarity, embarrassment, and coherence could have been uttered by Faustina rather than by Jesus.<sup>401</sup> The point he is trying to make in putting forth this imaginary case study is that even if a number of criteria are fulfilled, that in and of itself does not make it any more likely that a tradition originated with Jesus rather than with Faustina in the early church. The practice of using criteria, however, appears to operate with the premise that it does, and therefore the practice is considered to be flawed.

This review of the criticisms of the criteria of authenticity serves a greater purpose than simply refreshing one's memory. When this review is set alongside a proper understanding of what the criteria actually are and the role they play in historical work, it should allow one to observe that none of these criticisms actually provide grounds for abandoning them.

#### **4.2.2 What Are the Criteria, Really?**

Before looking at the role the criteria play in historical work, one must be clear about what the criteria really are. For although scholars continually talk about 'criteria', these criteria, as I understand them, are not strictly criteria.<sup>402</sup> Rather, the criteria are simply data.<sup>403</sup> To say that a tradition or a broader theme found in the sources fulfills the

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 8-10.

<sup>402</sup> I think that this is quite apparent from the criticisms just reviewed. Just because a tradition fulfills one or more of these 'criteria', this does not indicate that it is more likely to be authentic.

<sup>403</sup> Although, as noted above, the term 'datum/data' is used with reference to a particular tradition, it is also recognized both by scholars who have been critical of the criteria as well as scholars who have utilized them that the criteria are nothing but a type of datum/data. In other words, these criteria-data are data that are relevant to judgments about the historicity of a particular historical-datum, such as Jesus' selection of an inner circle of Twelve disciples, which might then be used to say something about the historical Jesus. See, e.g., Eve, 'Meier, Miracle', 32, who, in the course of criticizing Meier's use of the criterion of multiple attestation, says, 'This is not to suggest that the *fact* [i.e., 'datum', to use my terminology] of multiple attestation is irrelevant, but it is to question its use as a *criterion*. The more widespread the notion of Jesus' miracle-working is among diverse independent sources, the harder it is to maintain, as Mack wants to, that this miracle-working is simply the invention of one particular Jesus-group. And the more diverse and widespread the miracle tradition is, the earlier its originating point is likely to be, and in that sense, the more likely it is that it may go back to the historical Jesus. But this is a long way from making the criterion of multiple attestation an automatic guarantor of *high* historical probability, which is how Meier appears to use it'. Meier, however, appears to be fully aware of Eve's point. He states that 'the use of the valid criteria is more an art than a science, requiring sensitivity to the individual case rather than mechanical implementation' (*A Marginal Jew*, vol. 1, 183-184). A clear case in which Meier appears to use carefully the criteria precisely as data (or 'facts'), despite his continued use of the terminology of 'criteria', may be seen in Meier's article arguing for the authenticity of Jesus' selection of an inner circle of 12 disciples ('The Circle of the Twelve: Did It Exist during Jesus' Public Ministry?').



criterion of multiple attestation, for example, is simply to say that one of the data that must be considered when attempting to determine this tradition or theme's historicity is that it is attested in more than one independent source.<sup>404</sup> Maintaining this proper understanding that the criteria are actually only data, and that they can only function as such in one's historical work, is the first step in demonstrating that the criticisms reviewed above do not provide grounds for abandoning them.<sup>405</sup>

### 4.2.3 The Role of Data in Historical Work

Having established a proper understanding of what the criteria-data are,<sup>406</sup> one may consider the general process of historical work of which all data, including the criteria-data, are a part and the role these data play in that work. This process appears to me to involve, to put it in simplified terms, gathering data, validating it, and explaining it with what one believes to be the best hypothesis.<sup>407</sup> The first and most obvious thing to recognize about this process is that in various cases some of the data that will be gathered may very well be those that have been labeled 'criteria'. Whatever one's broader methodological approach, one might include any number of the criteria-data as a part of the totality of the data that one will go on to explain with his or her hypothesis.

More important than this recognition is the fact that historical work will often demand that one demonstrate why one believes that he or she is employing valid data. This process might be fairly simple or very tedious. For example, if one of the data that

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*Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, [1997]: 635-672). E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 98-106, does the same in his discussion of the existence of the Twelve.

<sup>404</sup> Eve, 'Meier, Miracle', 45, concludes his article by stating: 'If there is a wider moral to be drawn from this critique of Meier's use of multiple attestation in relation to miracle, it may be that it is potentially misleading to call multiple attestation a "criterion" at all, since this may be to disguise the fact that several assumptions need to be made before multiple attestation can have any significant evidential value for establishing historical authenticity. Shorn of those assumptions – which need to be examined carefully in each case – *multiple attestation is simply part of the data to be explained*' (my emphasis). I would say the same for all the 'criteria'.

<sup>405</sup> I should also note at this point that at least some of the data that are known as the traditional criteria of authenticity, such as multiple attestation or some form of embarrassment/dissimilarity, are essentially the same 'tools' that historians of other fields utilize. See, e.g., Schlosser, 'Scholarly Rigor and Intuition', 498-499, who says, 'The criteria which were gradually assembled by historical research into Jesus, and have been subject to reconsideration in recent years, are basically an adaptation of the rules governing all historical work to the particular case of research into Jesus and the birth of Christianity'.

<sup>406</sup> Henceforth, in order to maintain this proper understanding of what the criteria are, I will use the term criteria-data.

<sup>407</sup> See note 9 above again for works that discuss this process.

will feature in one's historical work is the infrequent use of a particular Greek word by a Gospel writer, it might not take very long to validate this datum; one must simply statistically demonstrate that it is used infrequently and one may move on to utilize this datum in one's work. On the other hand, if one wishes to utilize as a datum an eschatological saying of Jesus, then validating this datum as an eschatological saying might be a more complex task. In order to demonstrate that a reported saying of Jesus is eschatological one must set the saying against the background of known eschatological beliefs and texts in the Judaism(s) of Jesus' day and then argue that an eschatological interpretation of the saying in question is to be preferred over a non-eschatological reading. It is only then that one has validated his or her datum.

Closer to the point I am trying to make here, a good example of a scholar validating a datum that is often labeled as a 'criterion' is found in Raymond Brown's analysis of John the Baptist's announcement of a coming figure. In the course of his discussion, Brown utilized the criterion of multiple attestation. However, Brown does not simply assert that the Baptist's announcement is multiply attested based on any particular source theory, but instead provides an argument as to why he believes that the Baptist's preaching is more likely to be independently attested in John than borrowed from one of the Synoptics.<sup>408</sup> Another example of validating a criterion-datum can be found in Meier's work. Part of the reason why Meier accepts the historical existence of an inner circle of Twelve disciples whom Jesus chose is because he believes that Judas's inclusion among the Twelve was embarrassing. However, Meier does not simply assert that it is embarrassing without considering other possibilities. Rather, he offers an argument as to why it is better to conclude that Judas's inclusion among the Twelve was considered embarrassing from the first than to conclude that it was fabricated for some purpose and only became embarrassing later.<sup>409</sup> Of course, no one can ever hope to prove the validity of any given datum with certainty, as such proof is virtually

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<sup>408</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 52.

<sup>409</sup> Meier, 'The Circle of the Twelve', 663-670, and in *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 3, *Companions and Competitors* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 141-146. See also, Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 98-100.

impossible in the field of history.<sup>410</sup> What one can do, however, is argue that it is more probable than not that the datum in question is valid, i.e., that a given tradition is multiply attested, embarrassing, or eschatological.

Having gathered what one believes to be an adequate amount of what one considers valid data, one must offer an hypothesis explaining this data and provide reasons why he or she feels that this hypothesis explains the data better than its alternative(s).<sup>411</sup> However, one would be fooling oneself if he or she thinks that the presence of certain data will allow the historian to prove any given hypothesis objectively and with certainty. There are simply no data whose presence allows one to yield certain and objective historical conclusions; there is no datum or set of data, not even those that have been labeled ‘criteria’, that in and of itself reveals to the historian an objective and concrete explanation of itself.<sup>412</sup> Data do not function this way; the task of explaining data remains that of the historian. The only thing that one can do is put forth his or her hypothesis for the data and contrast it with alternative hypotheses.<sup>413</sup> Perhaps a majority of fellow scholars will find this person’s hypothesis the most convincing one as well; or perhaps it will find relatively equal support and opposition from colleagues; or it might, to the dismay of the one putting forth the hypothesis, be seen as a not-too-convincing explanation for the data. Each of these scenarios has played out numerous times in a variety of instances in historical Jesus research. This reality should serve to underscore that for any set of data, which could include the criteria-data,

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<sup>410</sup> This is because validating data requires one to engage in the entire process of gathering, validating, and explaining data at a more specific level.

<sup>411</sup> It should be noted that the steps I am describing are not necessarily sequential. Oftentimes hypotheses are formulated very early on and might even influence one’s questions and data collection. In fact, one could argue that forming a hypothesis should be the first step in this process, a hypothesis that is then to be tested against the data.

<sup>412</sup> Again, scholars like Meier appear to be fully aware of this. In response to those who wish to move away from the terminology of ‘criteria’, for example, he simply states: ‘Personally, I see no great value in the various distinctions or changes in terminology. My own view is that our judgments about authenticity deal for the most part with a range of probabilities; I do not claim that the use of the criteria I propose will generate absolute certitude’ (*Marginal Jew*, vol. 1, 186n6). See also Gerd Häfner, ‘Das Ende der Kriterien? Jesusforschung angesichts der geschichtstheoretischen Diskussion’, in *Historiographie und fiktionales Erzählen: Zur Konstruktivität in Geschichtstheorie und Exegese*, eds. Knut Backhaus and Gerd Häfner (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2007), 124-125.

<sup>413</sup> It is not even the responsibility of the historian to demonstrate that all or most other hypotheses *cannot* explain the data, because often times they can.

there can always be a host of competing hypotheses put forth by various scholars and that no datum or set of data explains itself. As unsatisfying as this might be, it is, I think, as far as one can responsibly go in his or her historical work given the subjective nature of the field.<sup>414</sup>

With this brief description of what historical work entails and the role that data, including the data labeled ‘criteria’, play in such work, it is rather easy to demonstrate that the groups of criticisms reviewed above leave one with no reasons for abandoning the criteria-data.

#### **4.2.4 Revisiting the Criticisms of the Criteria-Data**

Consider the first group of criticisms again. These are not criticisms of the criteria-data themselves. They are rather criticisms of a certain methodological approach, or, more specifically, some of the premises underlying it, that utilized the criteria-data. This means, however, that this first group of criticisms is irrelevant to anyone who does not hold these premises. Because using the criteria-data as a part of the set of data that one has gathered and will attempt to explain does not necessitate a particular methodological approach, and because it certainly does not require that one hold any or all of the premises being criticized, the first group of criticisms provide no reason to abandon the criteria.<sup>415</sup> It simply does not follow that because a particular methodology that has employed these specific criteria-data might be flawed, one therefore should abandon the particular criteria-data that played a role in it.<sup>416</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>414</sup> See, e.g., Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 107-111; Schlosser, ‘Scholarly Rigor’, 478-485, 499. As noted above, even cases where the vast majority of scholars have agreed on an issue, there are still some who do not.

<sup>415</sup> It seems quite unreasonable to me to single out certain data, in this case the criteria-data, and imply that any scholar who uses any of these data may be grouped into one category, a category that can be characterized as holding flawed premises and engaging in flawed historical work. This is the problem that I have with Keith’s analysis. He appears to want to categorize any scholar utilizing any datum that has been characterized as a criterion as doing the same sort of flawed historical work as ‘the form critics’ did. I would argue that this is clearly not the case. The sort of general historical work I just describe above may or may not include among the data to be explained some of the traditional criteria, but the type of data used does not determine the sort of history one is doing or the sort of methodological premises one holds. One may very well not hold any of the premises that are characteristic of the ‘criteria approach’ described by Keith, but nevertheless include among one’s data some of the traditional criteria. And again, some of these criteria-data are simply common historical data that scholars in other fields also use.

<sup>416</sup> This, frankly, sounds like a logical fallacy. It would be like arguing: (a) cats have claws; (b) cats are bad; (c) therefore, all animals with claws are bad.

the first set of criticisms provides no grounds for setting aside the criteria-data in future historical research on Jesus.

Turning again to the second group of criticisms, Allison is certainly correct in noting that, given the nature of historical work, using criteria-data does not allow one to reach objective or definite historical conclusions. Yet, a proper understanding of the role and function of criteria-data carries with it the recognition that no datum or set of data can provide one with the ability to produce objective and definite historical conclusions.<sup>417</sup> Furthermore, it should not surprise anyone that scholars reach different conclusions even when they are using the same criteria-data. There will always be a variety of hypotheses that can explain the same datum or set of data, and in some cases the data might well point in two different directions, thereby producing two relatively equally persuasive, but contradictory, hypotheses. In some cases, there may be an explanation of a set of data that convinces the vast majority of scholars, e.g., that Jesus' baptism or the *titulus* are historical, thereby producing something of a consensus. But the fact that in many other cases scholars have presented different hypotheses explaining the same data, or even used the same data to support two contradictory conclusions, should not cause us to throw up our hands in exasperation. This is simply the nature of data and historical work.<sup>418</sup> None of this, however, provides the historical Jesus scholar with any reason to set aside the particular data known as criteria.

The third group of criticisms is likewise without force. The use of data in historical work, even the criteria-data, often requires one to validate the data one is

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<sup>417</sup> In addition to the scholars referenced above, see also Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum*, 262, who write: 'Man darf sie auch nicht mit stringenten >>Beweismitteln<< verwechseln; sie haben lediglich argumentativen Charakter bei den Versuchen, sich der Person Jesu anzunähern. Man sollte sie eher als Entscheidungshilfen bei strittigen Fragen verstehen. Keinesfalls geht es um zwingende Beweise für die Authentizität von Jesusworten und -taten, sonder um >>Plausibilitätskriterien<< für die Unterscheidung von Graden der Wahrscheinlichkeit'.

<sup>418</sup> This is in no way unique to historical Jesus studies. Morley, for example, states, 'Of course, historians disagree, at inordinate length, about almost every aspect of the past, but this does not undermine the authority of history as a whole. The real problem for historians lies in deciding what should be allowed to call itself history' (*Ancient History*, 46), and later writes, 'in almost every area of ancient history you can take your pick from at least two theories, drawing on the same sources to reach radically different conclusions' (*Ibid.*, 89). See also, Michael Grant, *Jesus* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1999), 201: 'When, for example, one tries to build up facts from the accounts of pagan historians, judgment often has to be given not in light of any external confirmation...but on the basis of historical deductions and arguments which attain nothing better than probability. The same applies to the Gospels'.

utilizing. So, as in the examples from Brown and Meier provided above, before one appeals to the multiple literary attestation of a tradition or its embarrassing nature, one should provide reasons as to why it is more likely than not that the tradition in question does have multiple literary attestation or is embarrassing. Of course, as Hooker and others continually make clear, such judgments remain tentative given our incomplete knowledge. Yet, these sorts of judgments will always be tentative, as our knowledge will likely never be as complete as we would like.<sup>419</sup> This does not mean that using the available knowledge that is available to make these tentative judgments is somehow bad practice or without value. Again, I think the examples of Brown and Meier demonstrating a given tradition's multiple attestation or embarrassment indicate that such judgments are, in fact, quite reasonable examples of how scholars can validate the data, even criteria-data, with which they are working.

The fourth group of criticisms certainly demonstrate how important it is for one to consider various hypotheses explaining any number of criteria-data, rather than assuming that the presence of a datum or set of data renders one historical judgment more likely than another; once again, there are always a variety of hypotheses that can explain the same data. This was demonstrated fairly clearly with Allison's example of Faustina, the Christian prophetess. However, I do not consider this to be sound reasoning for concluding that the use of the particular data that have come to be known as criteria should be abandoned. Multiple hypotheses explaining the same data is simply a part of doing history.<sup>420</sup> One explains data with one's own hypothesis and then offers reasons why one has considered this hypothesis to be better than its alternative(s). So, a scholar might hypothesize that a saying that is embarrassing, multiply attested, and dissimilar is more likely to originate with Jesus than in the post-Easter period, whereas

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<sup>419</sup> Even those who support the use of dissimilarity as a criterion-datum, for example, recognize how the judgments based on this criterion-data must be reached carefully and thought of as tentative. See, e.g., Theissen and Winter, *Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, 185-191; Stein, 'Criteria For Authenticity', 243; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 1, 172; David L. Meadland, 'The Dissimilarity Test', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31, issue 1 (1978), 48-50.

<sup>420</sup> See, e.g., Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum*, 262-263, who note: 'Der große Theodor Mommsen, der gewiß kein historischer Skeptiker war, vertrat schon in seiner Dissertation die These: *historiam totam esse hypotheticam*. Das sollten wir nie vergessen'. See also Webb, 'Historical Enterprise', 35-36, who discusses how one might discern which hypothesis of the many is the preferable one.

another scholar might hypothesize that this same saying is more likely to have originated with Faustina, and each could provide reasons for believing his or her hypothesis is preferable. This is simply what the practice of history looks like. But no particular data, even those known as criteria, are rendered valueless simply because scholars can offer different hypotheses explaining them, even if scholars are reaching completely contradictory conclusions based on the same data. I fail, then, to see how this fourth group of criticisms offers grounds for setting aside the criteria-data.

I am sorry to say that as I consider these various criticisms, they seem to me to amount to little more than criticisms of the irresponsible use of *any* data by the historian and a rejection of one particular historical methodology. I find it difficult to see how it follows from this that the criteria-data that have been or might be used irresponsibly must therefore be set aside if historical Jesus scholarship is to continue effectively, especially when similar sorts of data are employed by historians in other fields. This does not, of course, mean that our methodology is without its problems. I do not think that I would go so far as to say that the methodological foundations of historical Jesus research are ‘crumbling’ or that we are in a methodological ‘quagmire’,<sup>421</sup> but I would agree that there are some important methodological issues that must be confronted. The most significant of these is, to me at least, the fact that often historical Jesus scholars are doing history quite differently than ancient historians normally would.<sup>422</sup> I am unable

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<sup>421</sup> The title of Le Donne’s introductory chapter in *The Demise of Authenticity* is ‘The Rise of the Quest for an Authentic Jesus: An Introduction to the Crumbling Foundations of Jesus Research’, and toward the end of Keith’s essay, he writes, ‘historical Jesus research as it stands is in a methodological quagmire’ and suggests that one must ‘set these particular tools [i.e., the criteria] down and find other means of searching’ (‘Indebtedness’, 47-48).

<sup>422</sup> See, e.g., A. R. Cross, ‘Historical Methodology and New Testament Study’, *Themelios* 22.3 (1997): 28-51; Stanley E. Porter, ‘The Criteria of Authenticity’, in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *How to Study the Historical Jesus*, eds. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 700-705. I would disagree with Porter, however, when he says, ‘Without pretending to have made a complete study of ancient historiography and its methods, I can say that it appears that one of the major observable facts regarding the criteria of authenticity and their use in historical Jesus research is that they are essentially confined to use within this discipline, rather than finding acceptance outside the field of New Testament studies’. Although I do not find the use of the terminology of ‘criteria’, the examples of ancient historians that Porter cites demonstrates that they do, in fact, use some of the criteria-data. Robin Lane Fox, for example, appears to use multiple attestation of sources and/or forms (see Porter, ‘Criteria’, 703), and Michael Grant essentially uses the criterion of embarrassment (Ibid., 705). Furthermore, even though Grant does not consider multiple attestation to be useful when it comes to the Gospels, this is not because he finds multiple attestation useless in itself, but rather because the ‘evangelists demonstrably

presently, however, to address this issue, nor can I address any of the others.<sup>423</sup> All that remains for me to do here, having explained how and why I believe criteria-data can still be used responsibly in historical Jesus research, is to elaborate on the broader methodology that I have chosen and within which I will at times make use of the criteria-data.

### **4.3 My Methodology**

I have chosen to employ a methodology for studying the sources that is relatively multifaceted. I will work with both individual traditions and broader themes in the sources, arguing that they are likely based on historical events in Jesus' ministry. When doing so, however, I will not attempt to make judgments concerning the precise form of any saying, nor the precise manner in which any event unfolded. Rather, I will simply make judgments about the sort of thing that was likely to have been said or the sort of event that was likely to have occurred. So, for example, I will argue that Jesus likely promised the Twelve thrones in the coming kingdom of God, but I will not attempt to determine how Jesus might have worded that promise. Similarly, I will argue that Jesus likely performed some provocative act in the Temple, but I will not attempt to reconstruct that event in any sort of detail. When working with these individual traditions and broader themes, I will explain why I believe that the hypothesis that they originated with Jesus better explains the data, which will at times include some of the

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shared so much material from common sources' (Grant, *Jesus* 197, qtd. in Porter, 'Criteria', 704). In addition to all of this, ancient historians essentially utilize Theissen and Winter's criterion of plausibility as a methodology in their work, as Porter's essay demonstrates. In a conversation with Margaret Williams of the University of Edinburgh, a classicist and ancient historian, I ran several criteria by her and gave examples of how one might use them. These included multiple attestation, embarrassment, and plausibility. She only expressed reservations about multiple attestation for precisely the same reason as Grant, but she did not have a problem with multiple attestation itself. For an opinion different than Porter's, see again Schlosser, 'Scholarly Rigor and Intuition', 498-499, who says, 'The criteria which were gradually assembled by historical research into Jesus, and have been subject to reconsideration in recent years, are basically an adaptation of the rules governing all historical work to the particular case of research into Jesus and the birth of Christianity'.

<sup>423</sup> I came to realize this difference between historical Jesus scholarship and ancient history more generally after the substantial portion of my work in this dissertation had been completed. However, although I would likely change various aspects of the presentation of my argument, most probably making the argument for the historical narrative I favor far simpler overall, my historical conclusions would remain unchanged. Most significantly, it seems to me that, when viewed from the perspective of ancient history in general, my work here would be considered far more complex than necessary for the historical conclusions that I reach in it.



traditional criteria-data, than the alternative hypothesis that it did not originate with Jesus. At other times, I will not attempt to demonstrate that any given tradition or theme is based on historical events, but instead will reach historical conclusions based on other considerations. I will, for example, argue that the best explanation for the belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship in the post-Easter period was that it originated in the pre-Easter period. This argument, however, will not require that I demonstrate the historicity of any given tradition or theme in the sources.

It is in this way that I feel best able to establish historical data about the Twelve and Jesus, data that I will ultimately explain with what I believe to be the best hypothesis, namely, that Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure. As noted above, one's methodology is always open to criticism, but I hope that as one makes one's way through my historical work, they will find that I have employed a methodology that, if not ideal, is at least reasonable and useful for the question that I have chosen to pursue.

## **Chapter 5**

### ***The Twelve's View of Jesus***

#### **5.1 The Pre-Easter Origin of the Belief in Jesus' Davidic Messiahship**

As mentioned above, there is relatively widespread agreement that Jesus was believed to be the Davidic Messiah in the post-Easter period.<sup>424</sup> The question remains, however, as to the origin of this belief. It seems to me to be very probable that this belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship originated in the pre-Easter period. It has long been recognized that, based on the current state of knowledge of Davidic messianic expectations, it is highly unlikely that Jesus' resurrection alone was the catalyst for belief in his Davidic messiahship, as there is no evidence that the Jews of Jesus' day expected a Davidic, or any, Messiah who would die and be resurrected.<sup>425</sup> The resurrection could certainly have served as confirmation of that status, but it is very unlikely to have been its origin. Furthermore, as noted above, there was a wide spectrum of messianic and eschatological figures in the Judaism(s) of Jesus' day. Therefore, even after his resurrection and even if they believed he was enthroned in heaven in some way, it was still not necessary for Jesus' followers to speak of him as the Davidic Messiah in order to present him as a significant figure in Israel's history and/or eschaton. Thus, the resurrection was very likely not the origin of the belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship.

It does not necessarily follow from this, however, that Jesus was believed to be the Davidic Messiah during his ministry. In recent decades, for example, there have been some efforts to trace the origin of belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship not to the resurrection, but to the *titulus*. In other words, it was Jesus' crucifixion as 'the king of the Jews', along with his resurrection acting as a confirmation of that title, that served as the catalyst for belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship. The scholar most commonly associated with such a position is Nils A. Dahl.<sup>426</sup> There are two serious problems with this position, however, which lead me to conclude that belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship cannot be traced to the *titulus*, but instead must have originated during the actual ministry of Jesus.

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<sup>424</sup> See note 14 above.

<sup>425</sup> For only a few who follow this reasoning, see Dahl, 'The Crucified Messiah', 38; Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 177; Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 540; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 626-627.

<sup>426</sup> See Dahl, 'The Crucified Messiah': 27-47.

The first problem is that Dahl is not as clear-cut on the issue of the origin of the belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship as he is sometimes made out to be.<sup>427</sup> Dahl certainly suggests that the *titulus* was central for the post-Easter belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship, but it is also clear that Dahl believes that both followers and opponents of Jesus had likely viewed him as a Davidic messianic figure prior to his crucifixion. For example, with reference to the charge on the *titulus*, 'the king of the Jews', Dahl states, 'The messianic hopes of Jesus' followers may have been sufficient to occasion the charges raised against him. With Bornkamm we have to speak "not of Jesus' non-messianic history before his passion, but indeed of a movement of broken messianic hopes"''.<sup>428</sup> Elsewhere he makes the point again:

The crucifixion of Jesus as king of the Jews is a *necessary* condition but not a *sufficient* cause of faith in Jesus as the Christ. The same must be said about the Easter experiences of the disciples. They must have been convinced that God had acted through Jesus and that the kingdom of God was at hand. They may even have thought of Jesus as the Messiah, but if so their messianic ideas had undergone a radical transformation.<sup>429</sup>

Thus, Dahl's reasoning appears to imply that the *titulus* itself is not, in fact, the origin of the post-Easter belief in Jesus' messiahship; instead, he seems to be suggesting that Jesus was believed to be the Messiah *prior* to his crucifixion, and even that the catalyst of this belief was Jesus' own behavior.<sup>430</sup>

This leads, secondly, to what I believe is something of an internal contradiction in Dahl's own work. If it is indeed the case that Jesus' disciples saw him as the Davidic Messiah prior to his crucifixion, then it logically and necessarily follows from this that

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<sup>427</sup> See, e.g., Bird, *Are You the One*, 73-74, who, after reviewing Dahl's work, argues that 'the *titulus* alone could not have created the messianic faith of the early church. While Dahl disagrees with Bultmann's rejection of the authenticity of the *titulus* and rejects Wrede's theory of "resurrection = Messiah" in primitive Christology, he nonetheless is not too distant from Wrede in all actuality. For Dahl, it is the *titulus* plus resurrection faith that allowed the placard to be transformed into a messianic title and become an article of faith....Moreover, the *titulus* by itself can hardly have fostered belief in Jesus as the Messiah....While the *titulus* is undoubtedly part of the overall picture in explaining the grounds for Jesus's death, it alone could not have launched and sustained the messianic faith of the early church'.

<sup>428</sup> Dahl, 'Crucified Messiah', 43. In his essay, 'The Crucified Messiah and the Endangered Promises', *Word & World* 3 (1983): 251-262, he similarly states that Jesus' behavior 'made both adherents and adversaries think that he might possibly be the Messiah who was to come, or a false pretender' (258).

<sup>429</sup> Nils A. Dahl, 'Messianic Ideas and the Crucifixion of Jesus', in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010 [1992]), 403.

<sup>430</sup> See note 431 immediately below.

Jesus did and said things to inspire this belief, and, in fact, Dahl seems to agree that this was precisely the case. He writes, '*To be sure*, Jesus' activities are likely to have given rise to the question, among both followers and opponents, whether or not he thought of himself to be the Messiah. The authority with which he invested his actions makes this understandable'.<sup>431</sup> This is spelled out in more detail in another essay, where he writes:

Jesus acted as a teacher, prophet, exorcist, and healer, but the role of king and prophet might overlap. He acted as an agent of God, with an authority which did not quite fit any category. Both followers and opponents may have thought of him as the potential messiah, even though he himself did not claim to be *the* prophet or the Messiah.<sup>432</sup> I strongly suspect that Jn 6:15 is an addition to the story of the feeding miracle, but some sayings in 'Q' would suggest that what was now taking place in Jesus surpassed the presence of kings and prophets (see esp. Lk 10:24; 11:30-32;). Especially Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his action in the temple must have provoked the priestly aristocracy and could be construed as evidence that a messianic movement was taking shape. If Jesus was also supposed to have said that he would, by a miracle, destroy the temple and build it up again, that would also be proof that he claimed something appropriate only to a king.<sup>433</sup>

However, if Jesus did and said things, apparently potential Davidic messianic things, to inspire belief in his Davidic messiahship, then his ministry must have been by definition 'messianic' rather than 'nonmessianic'. If Jesus' ministry was messianic rather than nonmessianic, then what Dahl considers to be the 'chief problem with regard to Jesus' life, namely, the problem of the nonmessianic character of Jesus' public ministry in relation to his messiahship as affirmed by the sources',<sup>434</sup> ceases to be a problem at all. Thus, Dahl's essay is essentially an attempt to solve a problem that does not logically

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<sup>431</sup> Dahl, 'Crucified Messiah', 43 (my emphasis). On the previous page is where he states: 'We know little with certainty about the motives that led the authorities to take legal steps against Jesus, but we can conjecture some things with good reason. Jesus' sovereign attitude to the prescriptions of the law, his relation to the poor and to many suspect individuals, and especially his public appearance in the temple – all this, in conjunction with his eschatological preaching, could appear to be a revolt against the established religio-public order. The messianic hopes of Jesus followers may have been sufficient to occasion the charges raised against him. With Bornkamm we have to speak "not of Jesus' non-messianic history before his passion, but indeed of a movement of broken messianic hopes"'. In 'Endangered Promises', Dahl similarly writes, 'Yet he acted and spoke with an authority that made both adherents and adversaries think that he might possibly be the Messiah who was to come, or a false pretender. If that had not been so, it would not have been historically understandable that he was handed over to the Romans and crucified as an alleged king of the Jews' (258).

<sup>432</sup> He makes clear, however, that he does not believe the Messiah would have claimed to be the Messiah. See 'Crucified Messiah', 258: 'Jesus did not, I think, proclaim himself to be the Messiah; the Messiah was not expected to do so'.

<sup>433</sup> Dahl, 'Messianic Ideas', 402-403.

<sup>434</sup> Dahl, 'Crucified Messiah', 35.

appear to exist; for, if Jesus' behavior sparked Davidic messianic belief, or even only speculation, on the part of his disciples, then one need not appeal to the *titulus* to explain why the crucified Jesus was believed to be the Davidic Messiah in the post-Easter period. In other words, even if there were no *titulus* at Jesus' crucifixion, one still can understand why Jesus was revered as the Davidic Messiah in the post-Easter period: he was believed to be the Davidic Messiah (or at least there was speculation that he was) in the pre-Easter period and his resurrection confirmed this belief (or speculation).

For both of these reasons, then, Dahl's work provides no grounds for believing that the origin of the belief in Jesus' messiahship should be traced to the *titulus*; to the contrary, his essays would appear to support the conclusion that the disciples saw Jesus as the Davidic Messiah prior to his crucifixion.<sup>435</sup> I thus consider it to be very probable that belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship arose during his ministry, and as I consider various traditions found in the sources, it seems to me that there is strong evidence that Jesus' inner group of twelve disciples were some of those who held and expressed this belief during his ministry.<sup>436</sup>

## **5.2 Peter's Confession**

Peter's confession in Mark 8.27-30 and parallels.<sup>437</sup> is where the Twelve's belief that Jesus was the Davidic Messiah comes through most clearly. The account in Mark reads as follows:

Jesus went out, and his disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he was asking his disciples, saying to them, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they spoke to him saying, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.' And he asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Having answered, Peter says to him, 'You are the Messiah'. And he ordered them that they should not say anything about him.

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<sup>435</sup> I should note again that, in light of the above quotes and references, it seems that Dahl believes that the disciples did at least consider that Jesus might have been the Davidic Messiah, if not concluded as much. So, again, it seems that even attributing to Dahl the formula *titulus* + resurrection = belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship is a somewhat misleading characterization of Dahl's position. The important point for my purposes here is that belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship, even on Dahl's theory, still originated during Jesus' ministry and on the basis of Jesus' own behavior.

<sup>436</sup> This does not appear to be a controversial conclusion. As the reader will discover in the pages that follow, many scholars from a broad range of perspectives conclude on the basis of one tradition or another that Jesus was viewed as the Davidic Messiah during his ministry and that (at least some of) the Twelve were among those who held this view.

<sup>437</sup> Matt. 16.13-20; Luke 9.18-21. Cf. John 6.66-69

Since at least the time of Wrede and up until the present, scholars have questioned this pericope's authenticity. Wrede and those who followed him argued that Peter's confession could not be historical because belief in Jesus' messiahship only arose in the post-Easter period.<sup>438</sup> However, as noted above, there is a broad consensus that it is highly unlikely that the resurrection would have led the disciples to identify Jesus as the Davidic Messiah.<sup>439</sup> Thus, Wrede's line of reasoning is untenable.

Although most do not follow Wrede's line of argumentation today, many continue to believe that Peter's confession is a post-Easter creation. However, I find the hypotheses advanced by them to be either unsupported by the evidence or weaker than the alternative hypothesis that it was historical. For example, it is suggested by the Jesus Seminar that 'this story functions as a kind of authorization story for Peter...henceforth hold[ing] pre-eminent position among the disciples',<sup>440</sup> and that it is meant to serve as 'a model for others (compare the statements of faith made by Peter and Mary in John 6:68-69; 11:27)'.<sup>441</sup> However, this is not actually how the confession functions in the Markan narrative. According to Mark's report, Peter's understanding of Jesus' messiahship is uninformed by Jesus' death and resurrection; it is not the post-Easter confession.<sup>442</sup> This is clear from the broader context of Mark 8.27-30, i.e., Mark 8.31-33, where Peter's confession is followed by Jesus' teaching that he will be put to death, a teaching Peter completely rejects because it is unthinkable to him that Jesus' messianic role would include being killed.<sup>443</sup> Though I disagree with some of Meier's assessment regarding

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<sup>438</sup> Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 216, 236, 239; see also Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marshall (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 257, 347.

<sup>439</sup> Dahl, 'The Crucified Messiah', 38; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 540; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 626-627. In fact, one often encounters arguments that presume a pre-Easter Davidic messianic hope for Jesus. For example, this pre-Easter hope is what is said to have led to the creation of traditions like the passion predictions or the Emmaus story. See, e.g., Erich Dinkler, "Peter's Confession," 185; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 428-429; Lüdemann, *Jesus*, 411.

<sup>440</sup> Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 104, 303.

<sup>441</sup> Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 75.

<sup>442</sup> See James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 249-252; Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 613-614. See also Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 774-775; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 648-649.

<sup>443</sup> As stated by William L. Lane, 'It was the incongruity between "Messiah" (Ch. 8:29) and Jesus' affirmation which accounts for [Peter's] reaction' (*The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text*

Mark 8.27-33, he is correct when he insists that treating ‘Mark’s presentation of Peter’s confession near Caesarea Philippi necessarily entails treating as well the aftermath of that confession in Mark 8:30-33’,<sup>444</sup> and when this aftermath is taken into consideration, any suggestion that this confession was created in order to establish authority for Peter or present a model for others becomes difficult to defend.<sup>445</sup> For, whether one sees in Jesus’ rebuke of Peter a rejection of the messianic role<sup>446</sup> or his redefinition of it,<sup>447</sup> the text as it stands in Mark’s Gospel makes it clear that Peter ‘plunges to a nadir of obtuseness...[and] sets himself against the revealed will of God’,<sup>448</sup> consequently receiving the ‘shattering rejoinder, “Get behind me, Satan!”’<sup>449</sup> It is difficult to see how this amounts to an authorization of Peter or a model for others.

In contrast to the hypothesis that Mark created Peter’s confession in order to establish Peter’s authority and provide a model for others, Theodore Weeden has suggested that Mark 8.27-30 is part of a ‘carefully formulated polemical device created

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[NLCNT; London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1974], 298). See also Edwards, *Gospel of Mark*, 255: ‘True to his heritage, Peter recoils at the thought of a suffering Messiah. Given the popular stereotype of a triumphant Messiah, it is natural and understandable that Peter should feel obliged to correct Jesus’; Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 613.

<sup>444</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 235-236.

<sup>445</sup> This aftermath likewise indicates that one should reject the argument that this story was created in order simply to assert Jesus’ messiahship. As noted by Bird, *Are You the One*, 119: ‘One can imagine the trial scene in 14:61-62 as comprising a creative effort to get Jesus to affirm his messianic identity, especially when posed in the simple question-answer format. However, to have Jesus initiate a nonmessianic question that eventually receives a messianic answer and then to have that answer qualified, the qualification rejected by a venerated apostle, and the same apostle scandalously rebuked and shamed – all this seems to be a rather convoluted path for a makeshift christological confession pressed into a pre-Easter context’.

<sup>446</sup> See Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 147: ‘As the Marcan narrative stands, not only did Jesus abstain from approving Peter’s words, but he possibly dissociated himself from them. His immediate reference to the future suffering was, in fact, seen by the angry Peter as a definite rejection of his Messianic creed’.

<sup>447</sup> See Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 610-611.

<sup>448</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 613. Marcus continues by stating that it is ‘no wonder Jesus responds by calling him by the name of Satan, the adversary to the divine purpose (8:33)’ (613). See also Edwards, *Gospel of Mark*, 249; Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 330: ‘The problem lies in the wide range of content which could be found in that title [i.e., Christ], depending on what background you brought to it. It will become clear immediately that what Peter (and presumably the other disciples) read into the term was quite different from how Jesus himself understood it’.

<sup>449</sup> Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 147.

by the evangelist to disgrace and debunk the disciples'.<sup>450</sup> The reason for doing so was to project back into Jesus' ministry the christological dispute going on among Mark's community between those who held a *theios anēr* christology and those who, like Mark, held a *theologia crucis*. According to Weeden, the christological dispute in Mark's community was so fierce that 'Mark felt he could settle it only by dramatizing the two sides through his presentation of the interaction between Jesus and the disciples. Thus, Jesus represents one point of view and the disciples the other'.<sup>451</sup> In the present case, Weeden contends that the confession and passion prediction are together intended to portray Peter and the disciples as holding a misguided *theios anēr* christology which Jesus rejected.<sup>452</sup> Weeden then argues that because

there is no historical basis for a dispute of this nature having taken place between Jesus and the disciples, the only conclusion possible is that the *Sitz im Leben* for this dispute is Mark's own community and that Mark has intentionally staged the dispute in his Gospel using the disciples to play the role of his opponents and presenting Jesus as the advocate for the evangelist's own position.<sup>453</sup>

I find Weeden's hypothesis to be significantly flawed. Even though there might not be evidence that the type of conflict that Weeden believes existed in Mark's community also existed among Jesus and his disciples, there is very good reason to believe, as demonstrated above, that the post-Easter belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship, which Peter appears to have held,<sup>454</sup> went back to the pre-Easter period. It is certainly plausible, therefore, and even likely, that Peter's belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship also originated during Jesus' ministry. Furthermore, it seems to be very probable that, given the sorts of things that Jesus was saying and doing in his ministry, the issue of Jesus' status would have come up among his followers, particularly the Twelve.<sup>455</sup> Therefore, there is nothing at all that is implausible about Peter's confession;

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<sup>450</sup> Theodore J. Weeden, 'The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel', in *The Interpretation of Mark*, ed. William Telford (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 91. See also Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 33.

<sup>451</sup> Weeden, 'The Heresy', 91.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-93.

<sup>453</sup> Weeden, 'The Heresy', 93-94.

<sup>454</sup> See, e.g., Acts 1.1-6; 15-26; 2.14-36. Peter's belief in Jesus as the Christ also appears to be assumed in Galatians 1.18; 2.7-10.

<sup>455</sup> See William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew: Introduction and commentary on Matthew VIII-XVIII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T



to the contrary, it is thoroughly plausible.<sup>456</sup> Therefore, whatever Mark's purposes were for including this account in his gospel, identifying these purposes does not equate to demonstrating that the account itself is unhistorical.<sup>457</sup> Thus, even if one accepts Weeden's exegesis of Mark 8:27-33, his reasoning concerning its historicity, and therefore his conclusion that the confession is not historical, is significantly flawed.

In addition to the flaws of the hypotheses tracing the confession to the post-Easter period, it can, I think, be said that the hypothesis that Peter's confession is

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Clark, 1991), 596. See also Christopher Rowland, *Christian Origins: An Account of the Setting and Origin of the Most Important Messianic Sect of Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1985), 182: 'It is inconceivable, in the light of the eschatological character of Jesus' message, that the messianic issue would not have come up either for Jesus or his contemporaries'; Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: Continuum, 1991): 'Those who maintain that Jesus made no messianic claims and that the identification was first made after the resurrection are bound to conclude that the story has no historical basis. Yet it seems almost inevitable that the question of messiahship would have been raised during his lifetime, a probability which seems confirmed by the accusation brought against him at the crucifixion (15.26; cf. also 14.61; 15.2, 18), so that we cannot rule out the possibility that the disciples believed him to be Messiah; they must at least have asked questions about the strange charismatic teacher to whom they had committed themselves'; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 645: 'If the question whether Jesus was Messiah arose at all during Jesus' mission, as it almost certainly did at its end, then almost certainly among the first to ask the question would be his close disciples....It would be very surprising if the impact he made on them and the relative success of their mission had not prompted them to ask just this question'.

<sup>456</sup> As noted above, Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 196, questioned the plausibility, and thus the historicity, of Peter's confession because he believes that the term 'the Christ' was too vague to be of meaning during Jesus' ministry. Peter's confession would be understandable only in the post-Easter period where the term 'the Christ' had a clear meaning. Maurice Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth: An Independent Historian's Account of His Life and Teaching* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 21, 395, follows the same line of reasoning. However, I do not find this line of reasoning to be persuasive. First, one has no way of knowing whether the historical Peter simply said 'the Christ', as Mark has it, or whether he actually did qualify the term in some way, if he even used the term; perhaps he did not use the term at all, but simply stated 'you are the son of David, the king of Israel'. If Peter did qualify the term in some way, then Mark might simply be relating a pre-Easter event with post-Easter terminology. Furthermore, even if Peter simply said 'the Christ', there is still reason to believe that the qualification of Davidic Messiah would have been implied. As I will suggest below, it seems likely that the Twelve had begun to see Jesus as, or at least would have considered the possibility that he might be, the Davidic Messiah early on in his ministry. Thus, if Peter did confess him simply as 'the Christ', it seems reasonable to conclude that he had the Davidic Messiah in mind, given that this is how he and the Twelve likely viewed Jesus at the time of the confession.

<sup>457</sup> Commenting on Luke 7.18-23/Matt. 11.2-6, John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 203n109, writes: 'The very fact that this tradition was later preserved in Q and then in Matthew and Luke shows that the early church found a use for it in its preaching, apologetics and polemics (e.g., dialogue and debate with Baptist sectarians). But Matt 11:2-6 par. is a striking reminder that to suggest or discern the *Sitz im Leben* of a pericope in the life of the early church is not to prove that such a *Sitz im Leben* was the original *Sitz im Leben* of the material. Hence the question that concerns us throughout this book is not whether a pericope had a *Sitz im Leben* in the early church; by definition, its inclusion in a Gospel makes it very likely that it did. The question is whether there are indications that the tradition had an earlier *Sitz im Leben* in the life of Jesus'.

historical has a significant advantage over them. That is because not only is it perfectly plausible historically, at least as plausible as its alternatives, but it also helps explain a datum that is otherwise difficult to account for on the alternative hypotheses, namely, Peter's rebuke of Jesus in Mark 8:32. I have argued elsewhere that there is good reason to believe that Peter's rebuke of Jesus puts Jesus in an extremely negative light, just as Jesus' rebuke of Peter puts Peter in an extremely negative light.<sup>458</sup> This rebuke of Jesus demands an explanation, and a messianic confession by Peter that Jesus follows with a statement Peter considered to be shocking, which I think was probably the passion prediction as Mark reports, explains simply and plausibly why it is that Peter rebukes Jesus: he thought of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah and so objected strongly to the idea that Jesus would die and thus fail in this role.<sup>459</sup> Interestingly, scholars have pointed for some time now to the embarrassing nature of Jesus' rebuke of Peter as evidence for the historicity of Peter's confession. Even those who doubt the historicity of the passion prediction and who would ascribe much of Mark 8:27-33 to Mark's redactional activity still propose keeping Peter's confession as an historical part of the tradition on the basis of its embarrassment.<sup>460</sup> If Jesus' disparaging of Peter may be taken as evidence in favor of the historicity of his confession, then I would argue that Peter's disparaging of Jesus is *a fortiori* evidence of its historicity. It seems to me that accounting for these data, i.e., the reciprocal rebukes of Jesus and Peter, on the hypothesis that Peter's confession is unhistorical would require a far more complex explanation than it would on the

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<sup>458</sup> See my article 'The Authenticity of the First Passion Prediction and the Origin of Mark 8:31-33', *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 8.3 (2010): 237-253.

<sup>459</sup> I argued for this historical narrative in 'The Authenticity of the First Passion Prediction', but one need not accept it to explain Peter's rebuke. There is a host of things Jesus might have said to set off Peter's rebuke. The advantage of positing that it was the passion prediction is that this explanation is based in the data rather than in conjecture.

<sup>460</sup> According to Lüdemann, for example, 'The starting point of the analysis of the tradition is that the addressing of Peter as Satan must go back to a tradition which is to be called reliable. For this 'diabolizing' of the respected disciple cannot be derived from the community... And the occasion for this form of address, Peter's messianic expectation, is likely to be historical... At all events a controversy took place over whether Jesus was the (political) Messiah (who would drive the Romans from the land and restore the kingdom of David, cf. PsSol 17)' (*Jesus*, 56-57). He and others go on to argue, as Dinkler had ('Peter's Confession': 169-202), that Peter's authentic confession should be attached to the authentic Satan-saying, and they deduce from this that 'Jesus resolutely rejects this [Davidic messianic] expectation and demonizes his first disciple' (*Jesus*, 57). See also Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 772-773; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 538-539.

hypothesis that it is historical, an explanation that would be based on conjecture rather than data and that seems entirely unnecessary given the historical plausibility of Peter's confession.

It is for these reasons that I believe Peter's confession is likely to be historical. It is historically plausible; it makes sense on a plain reading of the text; it accounts for difficult data simply; and the alternative hypothesis, i.e., that it is unhistorical, seems to me to require a more complex, conjecture-based, and yet unnecessary, explanation of the data.<sup>461</sup> Peter, therefore, very likely believed that Jesus was the Davidic Messiah, and because Peter was probably acting as a spokesman of sorts for the Twelve,<sup>462</sup> or at least representing their view,<sup>463</sup> it is also likely that he was expressing not simply an individual belief, but one that was shared among the Twelve.<sup>464</sup>

### **5.3 James and John's Request**

Mark 10.35-40 and par.<sup>465</sup> would seem to confirm that it was not only Peter who held this view of Jesus, but also others among the Twelve. In the Markan account, one reads:

And coming to him, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, say to him, 'Teacher, we desire that what we should ask you, you should do for us'. And he said to them, 'What do you desire that I should do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant to us that we should sit one at your right and one at your left in your glory'. But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized?' And they said to him, 'We are able'.

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<sup>461</sup> Scholars have advanced several other arguments in favor of the historicity of Peter's confession: Mark's naming of 'the villages of Caesarea Philippi' (see Morna D. Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St Mark* [London: A&C Black, 1991], 202; Davies and Allison, *Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 612; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 644); John's (6.66-69) apparent independent attestation of Peter's confession (see Davies and Allison, *Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 608; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 645); and the possibility that Matthew provides an independent, perhaps 'more original', attestation of Mk 8.27-33 (see Hans F. Bayer, *Jesus' Predictions of Vindication and Resurrection* [WUNT, 2.20; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986], 182-188; Davies and Allison, *Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 602; Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 185-197; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 658).

<sup>462</sup> As both France and Edwards observe, Jesus' response to Peter in verse 33 is directed at the other disciples as well, 'indicat[ing] that they, too, were party to the misunderstanding which Peter has voiced'. France, *Gospel of Mark*, 329. See also Edwards, *Gospel of Mark*, 249.

<sup>463</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 166-167, suggests that Peter is not actually a spokesman here. However, he, too, notes that Jesus' rebuke of all the disciples means that 'Peter's attitude must be typical of the disciples. Probably only he has the temerity to express it'.

<sup>464</sup> As France puts it, Peter was acting as 'more a spokesman for the group than the originator of a purely personal insight which would have taken the other disciples by surprise' (*Gospel of Mark*, 329).

<sup>465</sup> Matt. 20.20-23.

And Jesus said to them, ‘The cup that I drink you will drink and the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized, but the sitting at my right or at my left is not for me to grant, but it is for those it has been prepared’.

In this passage James and John approach Jesus and ask that he grant them seats at his right and left ‘in your glory’, or as Matthew has it, ‘in your kingdom’.<sup>466</sup> If historical, this passage would appear to recount an incident in which the probable pre-Easter belief in Jesus’ Davidic messiahship was expressed by James and John in the form of a request for thrones in the messianic kingdom alongside Jesus the messianic king.<sup>467</sup> This would seem to follow from the fact that they presume that Jesus will occupy the central throne and has the authority to appoint thrones to them. As illustrated above, it was believed that the Davidic Messiah would occupy a throne and rule over Israel, and the sort of leadership position and authority Jesus is assumed to have here is very much like the sort of leadership position and authority that the historical Davidic messianic figures discussed above were believed to possess.

There are good reasons, I think, to believe that James and John’s request is historical. As was the case with Peter, one has evidence that James and John likely believed that Jesus was the Davidic Messiah in the post-Easter period,<sup>468</sup> which makes it at least plausible and probably very likely that their belief went back to the pre-Easter period as well. Thus, James and John’s request is historically a very plausible one. The plausibility of this request grows even stronger as one considers how well it fits in the context of Jesus’ ministry and first-century Judaism. As Dunn correctly remarks, ‘That Jesus’ talk of the kingdom should have given rise to such ambition among his intimates is entirely credible’.<sup>469</sup> Moreover, if this request came as Jesus and the Twelve were

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<sup>466</sup> Matt. 20:21. Matthew notoriously has James and John’s mother request this of Jesus.

<sup>467</sup> See John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (SP 2; Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 2002), 314-315. Gundry concludes that it is more likely that they were requesting positions on thrones than places at the messianic banquet (*Mark*, 583).

<sup>468</sup> They are implicitly included among those who ask Jesus if he will restore the kingdom of Israel in Acts 1.6, and it appears that they are believed to share Peter’s view in Acts 2.14-36. John is with Peter as he confesses Jesus as the Christ in Acts 4.1-22. James’s presence among early Christians, and thus likely his shared belief in Jesus as the Christ, is assumed in the recounting of his martyrdom in Acts 12.1-2. John is said to be one of the pillars of the Church in Galatians 2.9.

<sup>469</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 560. Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 222, 420, 470, similarly points out the historical plausibility of James and John’s request. Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 440, observes that the brothers were likely ‘thinking of the Kingdom of which Jesus had spoken....in it they desired places of eminence and authority....they wanted the most

making their way towards Jerusalem, as Mark claims, then one also has a very plausible impetus for this question: ‘They thought, as one might well imagine, that they were going to Jerusalem to sit on actual physical thrones, and they disputed as to who would get the most important ones’.<sup>470</sup> Thus, hypothesizing that James and John’s question is historical leaves one with a plausible and economical historical narrative that explains the data rather than eliminating them.

There have been, however, various reasons offered as to why one should nevertheless reject the historicity of James and John’s request. It is claimed, for example, that Mark has fabricated it in order once again to embarrass the disciples and demonstrate their lack of comprehension. The Jesus Seminar puts the hypothesis this way: ‘One might suppose that a story about two prominent disciples attempting to grab power is not likely to have been invented after Easter, *were it not for the fact that, throughout his gospel, Mark depicts the disciples as obtuse and unsupportive of Jesus*’.<sup>471</sup> Yet, there is evidence to suggest that in telling the story of James and John’s question, Mark has utilized a pre-Markan tradition rather than fabricating the question himself.<sup>472</sup> Therefore, given that one does have good reason to conclude that Mark did not invent James and John’s request, it is ‘not likely to have been invented after Easter’, to use the Seminar’s words. As Meier puts it, ‘James was the first of the Twelve – as far as we know – to suffer martyrdom....Are we to suppose that the early church – and even

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important thrones....*their minds still moved in the circle of contemporary beliefs* (my emphasis)’. Bart Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 187 states quite bluntly: ‘Jesus evidently taught his disciples about their roles in the Kingdom (see, e.g., the Q quotation given above [Luke 22.30/Matt. 19.28]) – which may account for another firmly rooted tradition, that the message had gone to some of the disciples’ heads. For they are occasionally depicted as arguing among themselves over which of them would be the greatest when the Kingdom arrived. *Nothing like a vision of glory to raise a lower-class peasant into an egomaniacal, if imaginary, despot*’ (my emphasis).

<sup>470</sup> Wright, *Victory*, 462-463. Wright goes on to note, ‘This theme as a whole, whatever is made of particular sayings, has an excellent claim to be historical, coming as it does in many strands of tradition, and going against the grain of later adulation of early leaders’ (463). Hooker, *St Mark*, 246, writes, ‘[T]heir request shows how far they are from comprehending Jesus’ teaching, since they appear to think they have a right to demand a reward, and what they have in mind is nothing less than the best positions in the messianic kingdom which they believe Jesus is about to set up. They perhaps imagine that Jesus is entering Jerusalem in order to claim the Davidic throne and rule the nation’.

<sup>471</sup> Funk and Hoover, *Words of Jesus*, 95.

<sup>472</sup> Maurice Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel* (SNTSMS 102; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 198-199.

Bultmann views the core of the tradition as pre-Markan – went out of its way to invent a negative picture of the protomartyr of the Twelve? Did early church tradition even before Mark revel in presenting notable disciples in a bad light?’<sup>473</sup>

Another reason one might find the hypothesis that James and John’s question is a post-Easter fabrication to be preferable is that, although the question itself is plausible, the surrounding verses do not fit plausibly in Jesus’ ministry, but instead are more plausibly set in a situation in the post-Easter period. Mark 10.38-39, for example, is believed by some to be a *vaticinium ex eventu* constructed around the historical events of the brothers’ martyrdoms.<sup>474</sup> Note, for example, Lüdemann’s remarks

Underlying this is *the historical fact* that the *two sons of Zebedee* suffered martyrdom. For the martyrdom of James cf. Acts 12.2. As John the son of Zebedee was still alive at the time of the Apostolic Council around AD 48 (Paul mentions him in Gal. 2.9 as one of the three pillars), he did not suffer martyrdom with his brother, as is sometimes asserted.<sup>475</sup>

But one may be relatively certain about James’s martyrdom only. One finds that the conclusion that John was martyred is based primarily on Philip of Side’s (5<sup>th</sup> cent.) claim that ‘Papias says in his second book that John the Theologian and James his brother were killed by Jews’.<sup>476</sup> However, it is believed that Philip is far from a reliable source.<sup>477</sup> On the other hand, the more reliable Irenaeus makes no mention of John suffering martyrdom, but instead claims that John lived into old age in Asia.<sup>478</sup> Eusebius, too, who had read Papias, makes no mention of John’s martyrdom.<sup>479</sup> There is, therefore, simply no good evidence on which to base the conclusion that this verse is a *vaticinium*

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<sup>473</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 217. See also Taylor, *Mark*, 439; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 147. Hooker, *St. Mark*, 246, remarks: ‘Mark’s frank account of the disciples’ behaviour suggests that the story may be authentic’.

<sup>474</sup> See, e.g., Bultmann, *History*, 24.

<sup>475</sup> Lüdemann, *Jesus*, 72 (my emphasis). Similarly, the Jesus Seminar asserts: ‘Mark also knew, as he wrote this passage, that James had been martyred by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:2)’ (Funk and Hoover, *Words of Jesus*, 95).

<sup>476</sup> Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae 142, *Ecclesiastical History*.

<sup>477</sup> See, e.g., Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays* (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1904), 95, where he provides examples of Philip’s inaccuracy. Taylor, *Mark*, 442, notes the ‘unreliability of Philip of Side as a historian and the doubt whether he or the epitomizer has correctly reported the Papias statement’. See also Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 219, 264n.52; Davies and Allison, *Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 90-91.

<sup>478</sup> *Adversus Haereses* 2.22.5. See Bayer, *Jesus’ Predictions*, 59-60.

<sup>479</sup> See Taylor, *Mark*, 442.

*ex eventu*.<sup>480</sup> In fact, Meier quite rightly contends that far from being a *vaticinium ex eventu*, Mk 10.38-39 appears to increase the probability that at least 10.35-40 is authentic: ‘As best we can tell, then, Jesus’ prophecy was not fulfilled with respect to John as it was to James; and so the criterion of embarrassment may be invoked in support of the basic historicity of the exchange in Mark 10:35-40’.<sup>481</sup>

Yet another reason one might reject the historicity of James and John’s request is because one might claim that the following verses in Mk 10.40-45 is ‘laden with Christian theological meaning’.<sup>482</sup> If this were so, and if Mark 10.35-45 should be seen as one pericope,<sup>483</sup> then it might be somewhat difficult to set these verses plausibly in Jesus’ ministry. However, this claim does not appear to be supported upon closer inspection. In fact, these verses appear to fit just as plausibly, if not more plausibly, in the life and ministry of Jesus than in the post-Easter period. The sayings concerning the cup, the baptism, and being a ransom for others all have parallels in Second Temple Jewish literature;<sup>484</sup> Jesus’ emphasis on the Father’s authority over his own is ‘striking’, to use Meier’s term;<sup>485</sup> the criticism of the desire for authority and the manner in which the Gentiles rule is thoroughly credible on the lips of Jesus and consistent with his teachings elsewhere; verse 45 itself is ‘thoroughly Semitic’<sup>486</sup> while not containing

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<sup>480</sup> A. S. Peake quite bluntly notes the irony of some scholars’ use of such questionable evidence, ‘But the “critical myth” of John the apostle’s early death rests on evidence so flimsy that it “would have provided derision if it had been adduced in favour of a conservative conclusion”’ (A. S. Peake, *Holborn Review* 19 [1928], 394, qtd by F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 233).

<sup>481</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 220.

<sup>482</sup> Funk and Hoover, *Words of Jesus*, 95. I should point out that the Jesus Seminar does not make it entirely clear whether their analysis of Mark 10:35-45 as a whole counts against the historicity of Mark 10:35-40 specifically. I am drawing this explicit connection myself to entertain another possible objection against the historicity of James and John’s question.

<sup>483</sup> For the unity of Mk 10.35-45, see Mark Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 581-582; Casey, *Aramaic Sources*, 207-209; Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (WBC 34B; Nashville: Nelson, 2001), 114-115. For the numerous proposals as to how to divide Mk 10.35-45, See William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew: Introduction and Commentary on Matthew XIX-XXVIII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 84-86.

<sup>484</sup> See the references and analyses in Taylor, *Mark*, 440-441, 444; Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 252; Casey, *Aramaic Sources*, 213-216; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 218.

<sup>485</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 217.

<sup>486</sup> Witherington, *Christology*, 253. See also Taylor, *Mark*, 444; Casey, *Aramaic Sources*, 193-218.

Pauline language;<sup>487</sup> and it is unlikely that this passage is derived from the Last Supper traditions.<sup>488</sup> Thus, there is little, if anything, in these verses that suggests that the account is historically implausible; indeed, these later verses might only increase the historical plausibility of the account as a whole.<sup>489</sup>

Therefore, the conclusion that James and John's question is historical is quite reasonable in my opinion. The question itself, and even the account within which it is set, is historically plausible; it makes sense of the probable pre-Markan origin of this somewhat negative portrayal of the brothers; and this conclusion explains the data simply and without having to posit additional, unnecessary hypotheses. Consequently, one has good reason to believe that James and John, like Peter, saw Jesus as the Davidic Messiah who would rule and have authority in the coming messianic kingdom.<sup>490</sup>

#### **5.4 Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem**

A discussion about the historicity and significance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, often referred to as the 'triumphal entry', is common in scholarly works on the historical Jesus, particularly those dealing with the Davidic messianic question. As illustrated in the literature review above, these discussions often focus on determining something about Jesus' intentions or self-understanding. Here, however, the importance of this event lies not in what it reveals about Jesus, but rather what it reveals about how the Twelve viewed him.

The story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is found in Mark 11.1-10 and parallels.<sup>491</sup> The account in Mark runs as follows:

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<sup>487</sup> Taylor, *Mark*, 445: 'In view of the widespread assumption that the saying reflects Pauline influence, it is important to note that Paul does not use this terminology'; Witherington, *Christology*, 253: 'Furthermore, it is not true that *lutron* is a Pauline word'; Casey, *Aramaic Sources*, 209: 'It also makes Pauline derivation especially unlikely. Moreover, it is notorious that Paul never uses ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, and he never uses λύτρον either'.

<sup>488</sup> Witherington, *Christology*, 253, observes: '[The Last Supper] traditions do not use the key word *lutron*, nor do we find in them *anti pollon*, but rather *hyper* or *peri pollon*'.

<sup>489</sup> To all of this, Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 217, 219, adds that because there is no mention of resurrection, prophecy fulfillment, a second coming, or high christological titles, the likelihood that Mark 10.35-45 is historical increases.

<sup>490</sup> The anger of the other disciples over this request (Mk. 10.41 and pars.) suggests that they, too, shared the brothers' expectations and desires.

<sup>491</sup> Matt. 21.1-11; Luke 19.28-40; John 12.12-15.



And when drawing near to Jerusalem, in Bethphage and Bethany, by the Mount of Olives, he sends two of his disciples and says to them, ‘Go into the village before you, and immediately entering into it you will find a colt having been bound upon whom no one yet sat; loose it and bring it. And if anyone should say to you, “Why are you doing this?” say, “The Lord has need of it, and immediately he sends it here again.”’ And they went away and found a colt having been bound by a door outside on the road and they loose it. And having stood by, some who were there were saying to them, ‘What are you doing loosing the colt?’ And they said to them just as Jesus told them, and they let them go. And they bring the colt to Jesus and cast upon it their garments, and he sat upon it. And many spread their garments on the road, and others branches, having cut [them] down from the fields. And the ones going before him and the ones following him were crying out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is the one coming in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!’ And he entered into Jerusalem, into the Temple, and having looked around at everything, the hour already being late, he went out into Bethany with the Twelve.

Even though the Twelve are not explicitly mentioned in this passage, it seems likely that they were involved in the event described. It seems, *prima facie*, likely that the Twelve and Jesus would have been together as they entered the city to celebrate the Passover holiday. Moreover, I have already offered what I believe to be very good reasons for believing that the Twelve saw Jesus as the Davidic Messiah during his ministry. Thus, if something like the entry described in this account took place, it seems likely to me that the Twelve would have taken part in it. Therefore, if historical, this passage would provide additional evidence of the Twelve’s belief in Jesus’ Davidic messiahship.

For the purposes of this chapter a discussion of various details in this account, e.g., whether Jesus arranged for the acquisition of the ass, the size and composition of the crowd, and the precise words used by that crowd in its acclamation of Jesus, is not necessary. Rather, it is simply the historicity of the following core event of the narrative that is of importance here: that Jesus entered Jerusalem, possibly riding on an ass, while being acclaimed as king by his disciples, including the Twelve. It is this core event that reveals that the Twelve viewed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah.

For various reasons, it has been difficult for me to determine whether it is more probable than not that this core event is historical. First, the debate about the historicity of the entry is often intertwined with discussions about whether Jesus saw himself as the

Davidic Messiah.<sup>492</sup> However, I have intentionally set aside the question of Jesus' own intentions and self-understanding in favor of a different approach to the Davidic messianic question, so these discussions are at times not entirely helpful to me. Second, even if one were to conclude that Jesus did enter Jerusalem on an ass with a vibrant crowd by his side, it does not necessarily follow from this that he also rode in amidst a specifically royal acclamation from his disciples and the Twelve.<sup>493</sup> Still, having considered all of this, there are two data that have led me to conclude that this core event is historical.

The first datum is Jesus' crucifixion as 'the king of the Jews'.<sup>494</sup> Although I would agree that Jesus' action in the Temple could have certainly led to his arrest and perhaps even his execution, a Temple action alone does not appear to be a sufficient explanation for Jesus' crucifixion specifically as 'the king of the Jews'. Prophetic figures both before and after Jesus spoke authoritatively over, and/or caused a disturbance in, the Temple, but there appears to be no indication that they were thought of as royal figures as a result of this.<sup>495</sup> Even taking into account the fact that Jesus had at least a small crowd with him during this action, one still lacks a sufficient explanation for the *titulus*; in fact, one can go further and state that even if Jesus had caused a relatively significant, even rebellious, disturbance, and even if a large group were actively involved in it, one is still left without a sufficient explanation for the *titulus*. Consider, for example, the various prophetic movements that were suppressed by the Romans. Theudas, the Egyptian, the Samaritan, there is no evidence that any of these figures was executed as a royal pretender, despite the fact that they apparently led significant

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<sup>492</sup> See, e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 306-307; Catchpole, 'The "Triumphal" Entry', 319-334, esp. 323; Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 206-207; Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 120-121; Bird, *Are You the One*, 121-126.

<sup>493</sup> See, e.g., Joachim Gnilka, *Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 274; Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 120; Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 345. Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 270, 275, believes that it was the crowds and not the disciples who were acclaiming Jesus as king.

<sup>494</sup> As noted above, the majority of scholars believe that the *titulus* with the inscription 'the king of the Jews' is historical (see note 17 above).

<sup>495</sup> The biblical example most often noted is Jeremiah. The case of Jesus ben Ananias (*J.W.* 6.300-309), who was active in the years preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, is also often noted for its parallels to Jesus' Temple action.

movements aimed at the liberation of Israel.<sup>496</sup> It would seem to me that being a threat to the Romans, even a rebellious and seditious threat in the Temple, did not mean that one was a royal pretender.<sup>497</sup> Therefore, there is insufficient reason to believe that Jesus' disturbance in the Temple would have resulted in his execution as 'the king of the Jews'. There must have been something more.

Jesus' entering into Jerusalem to the royal acclamation of a crowd of followers seems to be just the 'something more' that one is looking for, as it would offer an excellent historical explanation as to why it was that Jesus was executed as 'the king of the Jews'. Scenarios quite like Jesus' entry would play out decades after Jesus' movement. Menahem, for example, entered Jerusalem with his following in the state of a king and made a dramatic appearance in the Temple, and he was killed by his enemies precisely because of his royal status.<sup>498</sup> Similarly, Simon bar Giora led a group of followers that acclaimed him as their king and aimed to take Jerusalem and the Temple under his control, and he appears to have been executed by the Romans as a royal pretender.<sup>499</sup> It seems to me that these events parallel relatively strongly Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to the royal acclamations of his disciples, which was followed by a Temple action and, likely as a consequence of both, his execution as 'the king of the Jews'. The entry thus offers the historically plausible missing link that is needed in order to explain why the Romans executed Jesus as a royal pretender.<sup>500</sup>

The second datum is that, as noted above, by this point in Jesus' ministry, the Twelve, and probably a wider circle of disciples as well, likely already believed that

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<sup>496</sup> The sources are, of course, sparse, but they are all one currently has. I am open, however, to having to revise my reasoning here should new evidence come to light and contradict it.

<sup>497</sup> Although I argued above that there was a clear link established between royal figures and the Temple in Jerusalem, I would not suggest that the link was so strong that Jesus' actions in the Temple would *necessarily* have to be seen as a royal action. Rebellious behavior in the Temple is not exclusively the prerogative of royalty.

<sup>498</sup> *J.W.* 2.443-444. Barnett, 'Jewish Sign Prophets', 692, believes that Menahem 'may well have' modeled his entry into Jerusalem and his actions in the Temple on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his actions in the Temple.

<sup>499</sup> *J.W.* 7.123-157. See Horsley, 'Popular Messianic', 491.

<sup>500</sup> Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 206-207, notes that the entry 'fits perfectly with Jesus' execution as King of the Jews'. He goes on to note that it is possible 'that Jesus did not intend to identify himself as the messiah, but intended his action as a prophetic sign that the coming of the messiah was imminent. It is easy to see, however, how his followers could make the identification, and how this action might have led to his execution by the Romans'.

Jesus was the Davidic Messiah. I do not believe one can establish a strict chronology for the gospel traditions discussed in this chapter, but in the following chapter I will argue that from early on in his ministry Jesus did and said various things that would certainly have excited Davidic messianic hopes, regardless of whether this was his intention. It reasonably follows from this that the Twelve's Davidic messianic view of Jesus had been established prior to his final trip to Jerusalem, or at the very least that they were entertaining the idea that Jesus might be the Davidic Messiah prior to their entry into the city. If Jesus was entering Jerusalem, especially if he was entering upon an ass, which could certainly be taken as royal symbolism and is perhaps more likely than some have been inclined to believe,<sup>501</sup> it is certainly plausible that his disciples would find this a fitting time during which to express the hopes that they harbored for Jesus.<sup>502</sup>

There are some data, however, that might point to the implausibility of the core event of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to royal acclamations. It is pointed out, for example, that the Romans did not respond to Jesus' entry at the time it occurred. Furthermore, it is noted that the Romans only crucified Jesus, rather than going after his wider movement as well, as had been their practice in the cases of other royal pretenders, suggesting to some that neither Jesus nor, more importantly for the present discussion, his disciples expressed royal hopes during the entry, if an entry even took place.<sup>503</sup> A variety of explanations have been offered in an effort to make sense of this lack of action on the part of the Romans.<sup>504</sup> In my opinion, however, the Roman's lack of action is perhaps not as troubling as it might at first appear.

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<sup>501</sup> See Anthony E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (London: Duckworth, 1982), 120-121.

<sup>502</sup> Although he does not consider it to be a Davidic messianic demonstration, Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 408-411, finds most of the elements of the narrative of Jesus' entry to be perfectly plausible historically. In fact, he argues that when the Jesus Seminar argues 'that the story "is a contrivance of the evangelist", "conceived under the influence of Zech. 9.9" and "also influenced by Ps 118.25-26"', they are thereby engaging in the 'destructive removal of Jesus from Judaism and from historical reality' (409).

<sup>503</sup> See, e.g., Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 241-251, who believes that some sort of entry to royal acclamations occurred, but that Jesus did not intend for these acclamations to be made and that it was not Jesus' disciples who were acclaiming him as king.

<sup>504</sup> See, e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 306, who, although not entirely certain of the historicity of the entry, responds to this question; Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 242-243; Bird, *Are You the One*, 124; Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*, 260-261; Brent Kinman, 'Jesus' Royal Entry into Jerusalem', in *Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus: A Collaborative Exploration of Context and Coherence*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Robert L. Webb (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 411-415.

As has been reasoned by other scholars, if the entry took place around the time of Passover, and if the acclamations reported in the Gospels are representative of the sorts of things Jesus' followers were saying and doing upon his entry, it is not clear that the Romans should have acted against Jesus right then and there. If this event even caught the attention of the Romans, which some argue is unlikely,<sup>505</sup> it does not follow that they would have heard or understood what the disciples were saying,<sup>506</sup> and given that the majority of pilgrims coming into Jerusalem would likely have been singing psalms or shouting praises to God, it seems unlikely that the Romans would have believed anything unusual was happening because there were crowds around Jesus shouting psalms. Similarly, it is unclear if the soldiers would have been able clearly to distinguish between the laying down of the garments and other vegetation on the floor in front of Jesus as he rode in, if this indeed took place, and the general enthusiastic entry into Jerusalem by other pilgrims. And even if Jesus had presumptuously entered upon an ass, and even if the Romans noticed this, it would perhaps call for investigation, but I do not see why, without further instigation, this should necessarily have led to an immediate assault on Jesus and his entire party. Lastly, even if the Romans saw Jesus' entry and concluded there and then that Jesus was a royal pretender whom they needed to dispatch, making an assault upon Jesus and his movement in the midst of a crowd of Passover pilgrims shouting psalms of praise in remembrance of Israel's deliverance from oppression might not have struck them as the best way to go about doing so; and once Jesus was dispatched, and without any indications that his following had further plans to disturb the peace, there would be no reason to divert more resources to tracking them down and killing them in the middle of the Passover festival.<sup>507</sup> Therefore, I do not find

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<sup>505</sup> See Kinman, 'Jesus' Royal Entry', 412-414.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 414: 'The soldiers nearest [Jesus and the disciples] would have been about 300 yards away, and the human voice is not particularly resonant....And yet, even on the assumption that the soldiers could have heard what was being said about Jesus, the question remains: would they have understood its import? For, although the Roman soldiers with Pilate were not regular Italian soldiers (they were largely drawn from Samaria and other nearby regions), it is by no means certain that all of them would have been sufficiently bi- or tri-lingual to understand the words spoken or chanted from a distance, presumably in Hebrew or Aramaic, by Jesus' disciples'.

<sup>507</sup> Ultimately, however one explains the Romans' inaction with regard to decimating Jesus' entire movement, it is a question that one must answer whether or not Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass. Even if Jesus were only a prophet who had never rode into Jerusalem in this manner, once the Romans

it to be exceedingly difficult to explain why the Romans did not respond to Jesus' entry as it occurred or pursue Jesus' followers as a whole. It is at least easier, in my view at least, to explain this than it is to explain the *titulus* without there having been an entry of this sort.

In the end, I consider it to be likely that Jesus entered into Jerusalem, perhaps or even likely while he was riding on an ass, amidst royal acclamations from at least his disciples and the Twelve. The entry makes sense of Jesus' execution as 'the king of the Jews', which otherwise is difficult to explain, in a simple and historically plausible manner, leaving one with an historical narrative that has significant parallels with later royal pretenders' executions. Furthermore, it is an event that is to be expected given that the disciples likely already viewed Jesus as the royal Davidic Messiah. Finally, the inaction of the Romans at the time of the entry can be explained relatively simply, at least more simply than one can explain the *titulus* on the hypothesis that Jesus' entry was not historical. The entry thus offers the historian even more evidence of the Twelve's belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship.

### **5.5 After the Crucifixion and Resurrection**

Both Luke 24.13-27 and Acts 1.6 confirm that there were indeed intense expectations among the disciples stemming from their belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship.<sup>508</sup> According to Luke 24.13-27, after Jesus' crucifixion, two of his followers were 'going to a village...called Emmaus' when they encountered the risen

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considered him a rebellious threat, then one would expect them to have decimated as much of Jesus' following as possible. This is precisely what they did with other rebellious prophets like Theudas, the Samaritan, and the Egyptian. Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 134, attempts to explain precisely this discrepancy in the context of a discussion that has nothing at all to do with Jesus' entry: 'Even though it is impossible to be certain about the precise size of the movements they led, it is clear that the sign prophets should be distinguished from solitary prophetic figures like Jesus son of Ananias and from popular prophets like John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. Large numbers of people apparently came to hear John preach and to be baptized by him, and Jesus of Nazareth also seems to have had a relatively small band of actual disciples and followers. The sign prophets, in contrast, led sizable groups of people from one place to another in anticipation of some dramatic act of deliverance'. In other words, eliminating the entry does not resolve this particular historical question and is therefore not a strong reason for judging the entry or the Twelve's royal acclamation during the entry as unhistorical.

<sup>508</sup> It is not necessary to discuss the historicity, or lack thereof, of these passages. Whether Jesus actually appeared on the road to Emmaus or the Twelve saw him ascend to heaven, these traditions remain valuable for my discussion, as they reveal a tension between the pre-Easter hopes of the Twelve and the reality of Jesus' execution.

Jesus, though they are unable to recognize him. When the strange traveler asks the followers of Jesus about the ‘things’ in Jerusalem that they were discussing, the followers respond, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders delivered him to a judgment of death and crucified him. *But we were hoping that he is the one about to redeem Israel*’.<sup>509</sup> As observed by Theissen and Merz:

When in 24.21 the disciples say, ‘But we had hoped that he would be the one who would redeem Israel’, the fundamental expectation is one of the royal Messiah who will restore the greatness of Israel with military force. It is therefore logical that the risen Christ should make the title Messiah/Christ the object of this interpretation of scripture and show from Moses and the prophets ‘that the Christ had to suffer this and enter into his glory’ (24.26).<sup>510</sup>

This need to redefine Jesus’ Davidic messiahship in light of his crucifixion indicates that those who followed Jesus ‘had in fact been convinced that Jesus was Messiah, son of David, during his mission, but that their conception of his messiahship was radically transformed by the events of Good Friday’.<sup>511</sup>

Acts 1.6 provides evidence that this disappointed and then rekindled messianic hope was experienced not just by two followers of Jesus, but by the Twelve as well. Here one reads about how the Twelve asked the risen Jesus, ‘Lord, is this the time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ The hopes that they had built up during his earthly

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<sup>509</sup> Luke 24.21 (my emphasis).

<sup>510</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 609. See also David Flusser, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 243; Lüdemann, *Jesus*, 411; Bird, *Are You the One*, 65. Prior to changing her opinion and concluding that the Twelve had not seen Jesus as the Davidic Messiah in the pre-Easter period, Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 120, wrote, ‘[Jesus] followers both hoped for (Lk 24:21) and proclaimed (esp., e.g., the Triumphal Entry) that “he was the one to redeem Israel,” that is, that he was the messiah as understood by Jews at that time’.

<sup>511</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 653. See also Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 172, whose comments are particularly noteworthy given that he represents the so-called ‘New Quest of the Historical Jesus’: ‘With all due attention to the critical examination of tradition, we saw no reason to contest that Jesus actually awakened Messianic expectations by his coming and by his ministry, and that he encountered the faith which believed him to be the promised Saviour. The faith which is expressed by the two disciples at Emmaus: “But we hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel” (Lk. XXIV. 21) seems to express quite accurately the conviction of the followers of Jesus before his death.... We should, therefore not speak about Jesus’ non-Messianic history before his death, but rather of a movement of shattered Messianic hopes, and of one who was hoped to be the Messiah, but who not only at the moment of failure, but in his entire message and ministry, disappointed the hopes which were placed in him’. It is also interesting to note that Jesus is first called a prophet before being spoken of as the (redefined) Davidic Messiah. It goes to show, yet again, that there were not strict divisions between roles and that category mixing was quite common in eschatological and messianic speculation.

ministry had apparently been crushed with Jesus' crucifixion, as was clear in the Emmaus story. Now, after his resurrection, the Twelve's belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship was reinvigorated, and they continued to look forward to his restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Of course, Jesus did not fulfill this expectation, but simply states that it is not for them 'to know times or periods that the Father set by his own authority'.<sup>512</sup> That the non-fulfillment of the disciples' messianic hopes is excused and put off into the future in these two passages is likely an indication that those hopes were historical. These traditions therefore provide strong evidence of the Twelve's belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship in the pre-Easter period.

### **5.6 When in the Pre-Easter Period?**

The traditions examined thus far provide solid grounds for concluding that the Twelve viewed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah in the pre-Easter period. The question remains, however, as to when in the pre-Easter period this belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship arose; was it early on or only at the very end of his ministry that the Twelve came to view Jesus in this way? In my view, it is very probable that this view arose early on in Jesus' ministry, given that, as I hope to demonstrate below, various potential messianic things were said and done by Jesus from the outset of his ministry.<sup>513</sup> However, I would like to make a more controversial proposal. I would like to hypothesize that John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Davidic Messiah whose coming he announced and that some, if not all, of those who would come to make up the Twelve began to follow Jesus as the Davidic Messiah on the basis of this identification; if this historical narrative is sound, then it would demonstrate that Jesus was viewed as the Davidic Messiah from the earliest stages of his ministry. I understand, however, that my hypothesis might strike some as implausible and perhaps even naïve, but I would argue that given four particular historical data from the Gospels, this hypothesis may be shown to be preferable to its alternative(s).

In an effort to demonstrate this, I will first offer my reasons for believing that the Baptist probably announced the coming of the Davidic Messiah, after which I will offer

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<sup>512</sup> Acts 1.7.

<sup>513</sup> See chapter 6 below.



my reasons for believing that it is likely that he identified Jesus as the Davidic Messiah of his preaching and that the Twelve began to follow Jesus because of this identification.

### **5.7 The Baptist's Announcement**

Robert Webb correctly observes that '[a]ccording to the [New Testament], a central feature of John's eschatological proclamation was the announcement of the imminent arrival of an expected figure'.<sup>514</sup> The Gospels' accounts of the Baptist's announcement are found in Mark 1.7-8 and parallels.<sup>515</sup> I present here the Markan, Q, and Johannine versions of his announcement for analysis:

And he proclaimed saying, 'The one mightier than I is coming after me; I am not worthy, having stooped down, to untie the thong of his sandals. I baptized you in water; but he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit'.<sup>516</sup>

I baptize you [[in]] water, but the one to come after me is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to [[take off]]. He will baptize you in [[holy]] spirit and fire.<sup>517</sup>

John answered them, saying, 'I am baptizing you in water, but among you has stood one whom you have not known, the one coming after me, of whom I am not worthy that I should loose the thong of his sandal'.<sup>518</sup>

This announcement very likely goes back to the Baptist himself. The tradition appears to be independently attested in Mark and Q, and probably John as well.<sup>519</sup> Furthermore, it does not seem very likely that the Baptist's claim that 'one who is more powerful than I is coming' would have been fabricated in the post-Easter period; 'one who is coming' or 'coming one' does not appear to be a popular designation for Jesus.<sup>520</sup> Moreover, the manner in which the Baptist's announcement is phrased does not indicate that he is making reference to a figure with an obvious and well-known titular description. Thus, Witherington concludes that one would expect something more 'than the vague "coming

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<sup>514</sup> Robert L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-historical Study* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 261.

<sup>515</sup> Matt. 3.11-12; Luke 3.15-18; John 1.26-27.

<sup>516</sup> Mark 1.7-8.

<sup>517</sup> Q 3.16b. 'Double square brackets are used in the reconstructed text of Q to enclose reconstructions that are probable but not certain, {C}'. (James McConkey Robinson, Paul H. Hoffman, and John S. Kloppenborg, *The Critical Edition of Q* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2000]), lxxxii. All quotations from Q are taken from Robinson, Hoffman, and Kloppenborg's *Critical Edition*.

<sup>518</sup> John 1.26-27.

<sup>519</sup> For the reasons why at least John's account is likely independent, see note 526 below.

<sup>520</sup> Witherington, *Christology*, 42; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 202; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 281-282.

one” on John’s lips’ if this announcement originated in the post-Easter period.<sup>521</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that in light of these factors scholars of all persuasions have concluded that the Baptist’s announcement is historical.<sup>522</sup>

With confidence in the historicity of the Baptist’s announcement of a coming figure, one may consider whose coming the Baptist was announcing.

## **5.8 The Identity of the Coming One**

### **5.8.1 The Baptist’s Expectations for the Coming One**

Because scholars have identified various figures as the Baptist’s coming one, the task of identifying this figure is not a simple one. The possibilities that have been suggested include God, the angelic prince Michael/Melchizedek, the heavenly Son of Man, Elijah *redivivus*, the Aaronic Messiah, and the Davidic Messiah.<sup>523</sup> In order to identify the coming one as one, if any, of these figures, one must first determine what

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<sup>521</sup> Witherington, *Christology*, 42. Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 267-268, observes that ‘most of the elements of John’s description of the expected figure are quite vague and could have many possible references. Many people “came after” John, and of those who had political or religious leadership it could be said that they were “mightier” and “more worthy” than John’. See also Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 202.

<sup>522</sup> Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 117; Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 54, 165; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 201-202; Lüdemann, *Jesus*, 8, 130; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 369. Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 134, states, ‘This material, which concerns a coming figure and impending judgment, is universally accepted by scholars as being authentic’. Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 173-176, accepts the historicity of the Baptist’s preaching largely because of its historical plausibility, i.e., how well it fits within the Judaism of his day. The fact that Josephus does not mention the Baptist’s announcement of a coming figure does not deter scholars from reaching this conclusion. It is regularly noted that Josephus had an aversion to messianic fervor, claimants, and movements (see, e.g., Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 239; Horsley, ‘Popular Messianic Movements’, 473-474, 485, 488-489; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 268-269), and, as Webb correctly observes, ‘Josephus’ account indicates that the people around John were excited to a fever pitch and ready to do anything and that this led Herod to fear *στάσις*. Such a response by the people strongly suggests that John was preaching more than the rather general ethical message Josephus attributes to him. Thus, while Josephus does not mention John’s preaching of an expected figure, his account of the social dynamics surrounding John’s ministry indicates that some such message may have been involved. Therefore, Josephus’ lack of reference to an expected figure cannot be used to argue for the non-historicity of the Evangelists’ accounts. In fact, Josephus’ account of the social and political dynamics associated with John is consistent with the NT accounts of the excitement generated by heightened eschatological expectation triggered by John’s proclamation. Thus Josephus’ account actually provides indirect, corroborative evidence for the type of eschatological expectation contained in the NT’s accounts of John’s proclamation of an expected figure’ (*John the Baptizer*, 269). See also Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 239-241; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 200; Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 129.

<sup>523</sup> This list is taken from Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 222-254. It is the most comprehensive list that I have found of possible figures for the Baptist’s coming one. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 369-371, lists four figures with only brief descriptions, and Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 34-35, simply names some figures that have been suggested without detailed descriptions. Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 312-314, provide a list similar to Webb’s but not as comprehensive or detailed.

the Baptist's expectations for the coming one were. This, thankfully, is relatively easier to determine than the identity of the coming figure.

According to the Synoptic Gospels, the Baptist declared that this coming one would be mightier than he was,<sup>524</sup> and all four Gospels report the Baptist's statement that he believed himself to be unworthy to perform an action with respect to the coming one's sandals.<sup>525</sup> This latter saying is attested in at least two independent sources, namely, Mark and John,<sup>526</sup> and, if one accepts the existence of Q, then this tradition has up to triple independent attestation.<sup>527</sup> Thus, the Baptist's expectation that the coming figure would be mightier than he appears to be attested, in different ways, in three independent sources.

Furthermore, the Baptist's belief that the coming one would be mightier than he, and that he was unworthy to untie (or carry) his sandals, is consistent with his understanding that his own role in the eschatological drama was one of preparation. In all four Gospels the Baptist is said to be a 'voice crying out in the wilderness' preparing the way of the Lord (Isa. 40.3), with John having the Baptist himself say, 'I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord", as the prophet Isaiah said'.<sup>528</sup> The connection between the Baptist and Isa. 40.3 possibly has multiple independent attestations. Dodd, and Brown following him, conclude that it is found independently in Mark and John, and Fitzmyer notes the possibility that Matthew and

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<sup>524</sup> Mark 1.7; Matt. 3.11; Luke 3.16. If one accepts Q, then this is a multiply attested tradition.

<sup>525</sup> Mark 1.7; Matt. 3.11; Luke 3.16; John. 1.26. Mark, Luke, and John state that the Baptist did not believe himself worthy to untie the thong of the coming one's sandals, whereas Matthew's Gospel has 'I am not worthy to carry his sandals'.

<sup>526</sup> In support of John's independence here, Brown, *John I-XII*, 52, provides the following analysis: 'First, John has features in common with Acts as opposed to the other Gospels, namely, the use of "sandal" in the singular, the use of "worthy" (*axios*) instead of "fit" (*hikanos*), a failure to describe the one to come as "mightier than I." Yet, in using *opisō mou* for 'after me,' John agrees with Mark and Matthew against Acts with its *met' eme*. In speaking of unfastening the straps of the sandal, John is closest to Luke, for all the others have variations....In not mentioning a baptism with fire, John is closest to Mark, against Matthew and Luke. In using the phrase *en hydati*, John is closest to Matthew, against Mark and Luke (*hydati*). Mark puts the two types of baptism in immediately antithetic or contrasting parallelism, whereas Matthew and Luke separate the two baptisms by intermediary lines; John goes even further in separating them by a number of verses. *From this evidence it should be quite clear how difficult and complicated it is to seek to explain John's form of the saying as a borrowing from the Synoptic Gospels*' (my emphasis).

<sup>527</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 271, states simply, '[This] statement in John's proclamation concerning his unworthiness is found in all layers of the tradition'.

<sup>528</sup> John 1.23.

Luke have not taken over this tradition from Mark, thus providing a third independent attestation in Q.<sup>529</sup> In any case, in light of the Dead Sea sect's use of this same passage for explaining why they 'segregated' themselves from the 'men of sin' and lived in the desert,<sup>530</sup> and in light of the Baptist's desert location, 'it is perfectly plausible that John the Baptist did use the text of himself'.<sup>531</sup> In fact, Dodd reasonably suggests that the fourth Evangelist 'may be closer to the facts than the Synoptics' in placing this quotation on the lips of the Baptist himself.<sup>532</sup> Lastly, as I will demonstrate below, the Baptist warned that the repentance to which he summoned his audience was a decisive factor in the coming judgment and restoration that would be carried out by the coming figure, and Isa. 40.3 describes this preparatory role excellently. It appears, then, that the Baptist believed that there would be a coming figure who would be mightier than he, and he considered his task to be one of preparation for the coming of this figure.<sup>533</sup>

All four Gospels further narrate that the Baptist contrasted his water baptism with the baptism of this mightier figure.<sup>534</sup> However, the Gospels appear to lack agreement about the nature of the coming one's baptism. According to Mark, the Baptist proclaimed, 'I baptized you in water; but he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit'.<sup>535</sup> The Gospel of John likewise states that the one to come was expected to baptize only with 'the Holy Spirit'.<sup>536</sup> According to Q, however, the Baptist declared, 'He will baptize you in [[holy]] spirit and fire'.<sup>537</sup> Because of these variations, debate has arisen as to whether

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<sup>529</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 252; Brown, *John I-XII*, 51; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 452.

<sup>530</sup> 1QS 8.13-16.

<sup>531</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 50. See also Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 253: 'Yet in view of a passage from the *Manual of Discipline* in the "Dead Sea Scrolls" it is by no means unlikely that the Baptist should have deliberately set himself to fill the role of the Voice'; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 108: 'In the case of John the Baptist it is probable that Isa. 40 is not only a subsequent interpretation of his life in the wilderness but also motivated this'. Later on page 206 they reassert that 'in the case of the scriptural citations we can imagine that John the Baptist already related Isa. 40.3 to his mission. Its central role in the writings of the Qumran community also indicates that this text was understood as a task for the end-time, namely to prepare for God's coming in the wilderness (1QS VIII, 13-16; IX. 19f.)'.

<sup>532</sup> Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 252-253. See also, Taylor, *The Immerser*, 134.

<sup>533</sup> Taylor, *The Immerser*, 143, concludes that 'it's clear' that the Baptist preached about a coming figure who was 'by far' superior.

<sup>534</sup> Mark 1.8; Matt. 3.11; Luke 3.16; John 1.29-34.

<sup>535</sup> Mark 1.8.

<sup>536</sup> John 1.33.

<sup>537</sup> Q 3.16b.

the Baptist spoke of a baptism with fire only, the Holy Spirit<sup>538</sup> only, or both fire and the Holy Spirit, as well as how any of these options should be interpreted.<sup>539</sup>

It seems to me that the best option is that of a baptism with both the Holy Spirit and fire, which symbolized a coming judgment and redemption. That the Baptist preached a fire baptism alone seems unlikely given that there is no text that supports a fire only baptism; ‘it is a purely hypothetical construction’, as Dunn points out.<sup>540</sup> That the Baptist preached a Spirit only baptism seems just as unlikely, as one would be left without a good explanation as to why Matthew or Luke would have added a baptism with fire to the Baptist’s expectations for the coming figure. As Dunn explains:

It is most improbable that Matthew or Luke transformed an earlier tradition [i.e., that in Mark’s Gospel] in which John’s preaching accorded so neatly with later Christian theology, by introducing a whole new hitherto unknown dimension to John’s preaching. On the contrary, the Q tradition matches its Jewish context so well and its picture of the Coming One is at such odds with the Christian picture of Jesus that it is almost impossible to deny the substantial authenticity of the Q tradition.<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>538</sup> In order to avoid awkward phrases, I will refer at times to baptism with the Holy Spirit simply as a Spirit baptism, assuming the adjective ‘Holy’. In support of the originality of ‘Holy Spirit’ see Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 275-277.

<sup>539</sup> See the helpful summaries provided by James D. G. Dunn, ‘Spirit-and-Fire Baptism’, *Novum Testamentum* 14, (1972), 81-83; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 473-474; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 204.

<sup>540</sup> Dunn, ‘Spirit-and-Fire’, 84. See also Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 204, who make this interesting point: ‘The pure baptism by fire is a reconstruction without support in the sources, which moreover could lead to the paradoxical conclusion that the baptism of John which preserves for eternal life would in the last resort be superior to the baptism of the stronger one, which destroys those who have not repented!’ Furthermore, it seems unlikely that ‘with the Holy Spirit’ would be added to the Baptist’s preaching in the post-Easter period. Nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus baptize with the Holy Spirit. One must wait until Acts 1:5; 2:1-4 before a connection between Jesus and a Spirit baptism is made, and if in the post-Easter period the Baptist’s fire baptism had been reinterpreted as a Spirit baptism (see T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* [London: SCM Press, 1949], 40-41) one might have expected Luke to have more than the simple mention of tongues being ‘like fire’ (see, e.g., Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 272-273). Moreover, simply adding ‘with the Holy Spirit’ to the Baptist’s proclamation hardly demonstrates that Jesus fulfilled this proclamation. For the Baptist’s preaching as it stands even in Luke’s own Gospel still remains in contradiction to what Jesus did at Pentecost; there is no definitive judgment on the non-repentant. If ‘with the Holy Spirit’ was a post-Easter effort to reinterpret or to bring Jesus’ activity in line with that of the Baptist’s coming one, it seems to me to be an extremely poor one.

<sup>541</sup> Dunn, ‘Spirit-and-Fire’, 85. Fitzmyer similarly observes that ‘the addition of “and with fire”’ in Luke 3:16 actually ‘stands in contrast to the Lucan formulation in Acts 1:5, 11:16’, and ‘there is no evidence that Luke has added [“and with fire”] here as “a Christian *peshier*-ing” of the Marcan text in light of Pentecostal fulfillment (Acts 2:3,19), *pace* E. E. Ellis, *Gospel of Luke*, 90’ (Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 473). See also Webb, *John the Baptist*, 273: ‘E. Earle Ellis states: ““fire” is absent in Mark and probably is a Christian *peshier*-ing to the Pentecostal fulfillment”. But the use of “fire” to describe the expected figure’s baptism does not provide a clear interpretive link with Pentecost, because the fire imagery in both the preceding and succeeding contexts in John’s preaching indicate a fire of judgment (Q 3.9, 17)’.

Furthermore, both the hypothesis of a Spirit only baptism and the hypothesis of a fire only baptism overlook the likely fact that the Baptist announced a coming judgment *and* restoration, not simply one or the other. This appears likely on the basis of the threshing floor imagery employed by the Baptist in his preaching,<sup>542</sup> which envisages the wheat, i.e., those who repented, being separated from the chaff, i.e., those who did not repent, and stored in the granary whereas the chaff will be burned. A fire only baptism overemphasizes the aspect of punitive judgment in the Baptist's preaching,<sup>543</sup> whereas a Spirit only baptism overemphasizes the Baptist's redemptive aspect of the Baptist's preaching.<sup>544</sup> A baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire symbolizing both judgment and redemption, on the other hand, seems to fit this imagery quite well.<sup>545</sup> Therefore, Luke

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<sup>542</sup> Luke 3.17/Matt. 3.12. Webb notes that this saying about the threshing floor 'is almost universally regarded as authentic to John. It employs Palestinian farming techniques for its imagery and applies them in a manner consistent with similar usage in the OT' (*John the Baptizer*, 277). He goes on to point out that despite the fact that 'the pericope concerning the farmer at the threshing floor is dependent upon Q alone. I am aware of no one who rejects the authenticity of this saying' (Ibid., 277n.47).

<sup>543</sup> Manson suggests, for example, that when 'the reference to the Spirit is dropped, the true nature of the saying is apparent. It falls into line with the rest of John's preaching' (Manson, *Sayings*, 41. See also Bultmann, *History*, 111n.1: 'Like Wellhausen I believe that the original text was only: "he will baptize you with fire," meaning by that the fire of judgement'). But given what has just been said about the Baptist's threshing floor imagery, and considering also that he offered a baptism for the forgiveness of sins, it would appear that a redemptive baptism with the Holy Spirit would be as much in line with the Baptist's preaching as a punitive fire baptism (see Taylor, *The Immerser*, 134).

<sup>544</sup> Interestingly, Fitzmyer, who accepts that the coming figure would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, sees the baptism with Holy Spirit and fire as a solely restorative event, arguing that 'one could appeal to a number of OT passages in which both God's Spirit and fire play...a role [of purification and refinement]: Isa 4:4-5; 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 36:25-26; Mal 3:2b-3' (Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 474.) However, it must be noted that in only two of the references offered by Fitzmyer (Isa. 4.4-5; Mal. 3.2b-3) is fire, or something like refinement by fire, mentioned, and these two prophetic books themselves use fire imagery elsewhere to denote judgment (Isa. 1.31; 30.27; Mal. 4.1). Moreover, in the eschatological scenes cited by Fitzmyer, the refinement is limited; there is still a group of the wicked, i.e., the unrepentant, facing eschatological judgment and destruction, which itself is described with fire imagery (Mal. 4.1. Fitzmyer also mentions 1QS 4.20-23, but see 1QS 4.10-14). I consider it to be more probable, therefore, that the fire baptism is a destructive judgment directed against the unrepentant, and not refinement of 'those persons who would accept [the baptism]' (Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 474).

<sup>545</sup> Brief mention should be made here regarding Best's suggestion that the Baptist spoke of a coming baptism with 'wind and fire' (Ernest Best, 'Spirit-Baptism', *Novum Testamentum* 4, no. 3 [1960]: 236-243). Best, too, appears to overemphasize the aspect of punitive judgment in the Baptist's preaching. In doing so, he also omits an important aspect of the Baptist's preaching. This is most clear when he claims that the association with the Spirit is difficult because the Baptist's words are 'directed to Israel and he threatens that the moment of punishment will come when the Messiah appears, whose winnowing fan is in his hand and who will burn the chaff with fire (Matt. iii 12; Luke iii 17)' (236). Yet, Best has omitted a significant part of this verse. For prior to burning the chaff, the coming one 'will gather his wheat into the granary' (Luke 3:17/Matt. 3.12). As noted above, the Baptist's preaching indicates that there was, in fact, a redemptive element. Therefore, a baptism with 'the Holy Spirit and fire' remains more probable than a

and Matthew probably preserve the Baptist's historical announcement of a coming figure who will baptize 'with the Holy Spirit and fire',<sup>546</sup> and this most likely indicates that the Baptist expected the coming one to bring the long awaited judgment and restoration.

Therefore, when it comes to the issue of the Baptist's expectations for the coming figure, I find Webb's summary to be fully supported by the evidence:

[T]he data from our NT sources which are historically reliable and so may be used in our investigations include John's expectation and proclamation of a figure whose description involved the following elements: (1) he is coming; (2) he is mightier than John; (3) John was unworthy to be even his servant; (4) he will baptize with a holy spirit and fire; (5) his ministry includes both judgment and restoration which is portrayed in terms of a farmer working at the threshing-floor, gathering the wheat into the granary and burning the chaff.<sup>547</sup>

I would, however, prefer to add a sixth point to this list: the Baptist likely believed that the coming figure would be a human being rather than a heavenly or angelic one. This seems likely given that Luke 7.18-23/Matt. 11.2-6 indicates that the Baptist believed that Jesus might be the coming figure of his preaching:

And John, [[on hearing about all these things]], sending through his disciples, [[said]] to him: Are you the one to come, or are we to expect someone else? And in reply he said to them: Go report to John what you hear and see: The blind regain their sight and the lame walk around, the skin-diseased are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and the poor are evangelized. And blessed is whoever is not offended by me.<sup>548</sup>

Of course, some have questioned whether this account recalls an historical event.<sup>549</sup>

Bultmann, for example, argued that 'in all probability the Baptist's question is a

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baptism with 'wind and fire'. For further arguments against Best's reading, see Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire', 85-92; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 275-276.

<sup>546</sup> For the purposes of this paper, it is not necessary to determine whether the Baptist expected one baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire, or two baptisms, one with the Holy Spirit and one with fire. The purpose here is to demonstrate that the Baptist expected a baptism that included judgment and restoration. Judgment and restoration can be included in one baptism (Dunn, 'Spirit-and-Fire', 86) or two (Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 289-292).

<sup>547</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 277.

<sup>548</sup> Q 7.18-23.

<sup>549</sup> Carl H. Kraeling, *John the Baptist* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1951), 129, and Paul Hoffmann, *Studien zur Theologie der Logienquelle* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1975) 201, deny that the Baptist would have asked such a question to Jesus, as he expected a figure that was 'transcendent', to use Kraeling's terminology. This, however, is a weak basis on which to reject this pericope given how uncertain scholars have been about the identity of the Baptist's coming figure. In fact, the argument can be reversed; Lk. 7.18-23/Mt. 11.2-6, if authentic, would suggest that the Baptist was expecting a human figure, and not a 'transcendent' one (See, e.g., Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 286; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*,

community product and belongs to those passages in which the Baptist is called as a witness to the Messiahship of Jesus'.<sup>550</sup> However, it is often observed in response to this argument that the Baptist is not actually called as a witness to Jesus' messiahship in these verses. To the contrary, 'The Baptist here appears in no way as a witness to Christ, but as an uncertain questioner, which contradicts the tendency of the early Church to make him such a witness'.<sup>551</sup> Moreover, it is frequently observed that nothing is said of the Baptist's reaction to Jesus' answer in this account; and it is especially noteworthy that he is not reported to have affirmed Jesus' response. Noting this, Dunn, rightly in my view, contends that had 'the question been contrived in subsequent Christian apologetic we might well have expected the episode to close with the report of the Baptist's acceptance of Jesus' answer'.<sup>552</sup> It seems improbable to me, therefore, that this tradition was created in order to make the Baptist a witness to Jesus' messiahship.

Another argument against its historicity could be advanced at this point, however. The Jesus Seminar, for example, recognizes this lack of a witness on the part of the Baptist, but they still argue against the historicity of this tradition, stating:

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371). Josef Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation, Geschichte, Wirkungsgeschichte* (BZNW 53; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 318, after questioning whether there was enough time for the Baptist to learn about Jesus' ministry and thus ask this question, goes on to state, 'Selbst wenn ein größerer Zeitraum zwischen der Gefangennahme und der Hinrichtung angenommen werden könnte, bleibt doch unwahrscheinlich, daß es ungehinderte Kontakte des gefangenen Täufers mit seinen Jüngern gegeben hat. Die eher moderate Schilderung der Haftbedingungen bei Markus (6,20) ist >>ein beliebtes Motiv in Geschichten der vorliegenden Art (vgl. Apg 24,24-26: Paulus in der Hand des Statthalters Felix<<, d. h. die situativen Rahmenbedingungen sprechen gegen die Geschichtlichkeit. Das Jesuswort vom Gefangenenbesuch in der Gerichtsszene des Matthäus (25,36) ist kein Gegenbeweis.' But against Ernst, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 198n89, who does indeed appeal to, among other things, Matt. 25.36. Ernst does not appear to explain why he believes Mt. 25.36 should not count against his objection.

<sup>550</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 23.

<sup>551</sup> Werner G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*, trans. D. M. Barton (London: SCM Press, 1957), 110-111. See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 244; Webb, *John the Baptist*, 281. Davies and Allison, *Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 244-246, provide numerous arguments in favor of this tradition. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1997 [1975]), 56-58, refutes several different tradition histories that seek to trace the origin of this pericope to some concern in the early Church. Interestingly, Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 175, argues for the historicity of the Baptist's announcement of a coming figure on the basis of Luke 7.18-23/Matt. 11.2-6: 'Christian belief that Jesus fulfilled one of John's predictions led to it being recorded in both Mark and in "Q" material. The prediction must be authentic, because the "Q" material records John's own uncertainty as to whether Jesus fulfilled this prediction'. For other reasons he accepts its authenticity, see *Jesus of Nazareth*, 181-183. As is common throughout his work, historical plausibility figures heavily in his reasoning, which is something I greatly admire.

<sup>552</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 447.



As it is represented in Q, the structure of the exchange is a Christian ploy: John's followers are made to play the straight man to Jesus by asking an innocent question to which Christians can give an unequivocal reply: 'Yes, Jesus is the Coming One' (understood by Christians as the expected messiah). For his part, John the Baptist is pictured as uncertain about the status of Jesus, contrary to the way his testimony to Jesus is presented in the Gospel of John (1:29-34).<sup>553</sup>

I find this hypothesis to be unconvincing for several reasons. In the first place, even though they note that the Baptist is not a witness to Jesus' messiahship, this is not explained, but rather simply remains an oddity of the account. Furthermore, it seems clear that the Baptist's expectations for the coming figure in no way found their fulfillment in Jesus' answer to the Baptist;<sup>554</sup> there was no judgment and Israel had not been restored.<sup>555</sup> Under the Jesus Seminar's hypothesis, one might expect those who had supposedly fabricated this tradition to have resolved somehow the tension between the Baptist's expectations for the coming figure and what Jesus was actually doing in his ministry, but this does not happen;<sup>556</sup> Jesus never clearly affirms that he is the coming one and the Baptist never accepts or affirms Jesus' answer.<sup>557</sup> Jesus, then, is not at all unequivocally the coming one, as the Jesus Seminar contends.<sup>558</sup>

Therefore, I remain of the opinion that the Baptist's question is historical and that it indicates that he believed the coming figure would be a human being. With this slightly revised, now six-point description of the coming figure,<sup>559</sup> one may now turn to the task of identifying him.

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<sup>553</sup> Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 47. See also Kraeling, *John the Baptist*, 28-130; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 318.

<sup>554</sup> See Witherington, *Christology*, 43.

<sup>555</sup> Davies and Allison suggest that had this been a post-Easter creation one might expect some mention of the coming Son of Man and his judgment or Jesus as the eschatological, but one does not (*Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 245).

<sup>556</sup> Note again Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 447, who contends that had 'the question been contrived in subsequent Christian apologetic we might well have expected the episode to close with the report of the Baptist's acceptance of Jesus' answer'. See also Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 135-136.

<sup>557</sup> Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 57-58.

<sup>558</sup> However one interprets Jesus' response as it is presented in the Gospels' accounts, whether its as an implicit 'yes' or an implicit 'no', the fact that one must present an argument for either of these options indicates that this pericope offers anything but an 'unequivocal reply' to the Baptist's question. After considering the arguments, Taylor, *The Immerser*, 290-291, concludes that the Baptist asked Jesus if he was the coming one.

<sup>559</sup> I list them here again to remind the reader: (1) he is coming; (2) he is mightier than John; (3) John was unworthy to be even his servant; (4) he will baptize with a holy spirit and fire; (5) his ministry includes both judgment and restoration which is portrayed in terms of a farmer working at the threshing-floor,

### 5.8.2 The Candidates

Once again, the possibilities for the identity of the coming one include God, the angelic prince Michael/Melchizedek, the human-like figure/the Son of Man, Elijah *redivivus*, the Aaronic Messiah, and the Davidic Messiah. Webb has provided a useful analysis of each of these figures in light of the Baptist's expectations for the coming one,<sup>560</sup> and one finds that although each one of these figures has, to a greater or lesser extent, features in common with the coming one, the Davidic Messiah emerges as the best choice, despite the reservations of some.<sup>561</sup> This is because even though the Davidic Messiah might not share each of the attributes of the Baptist's coming eschatological figure, the role the Davidic Messiah is expected to fulfill aligns far better with that of the Baptist's coming one than does the role of any of the other figures. I will attempt to illustrate this by examining each figure in Webb's list in turn.

#### *God*

Many have noted that God appears to fit the Baptist's description well.<sup>562</sup> However, it seems to me that God is unlikely to be the figure whose coming the Baptist announced. As numerous scholars have observed:

Probably decisive here...is the consideration that the talk of "one stronger than me", and of being unworthy to untie his sandals (Mark 1.7 pars.), is really appropriate only to a comparison between two comparable figures. It is difficult to imagine John [the Baptist] so trivializing the relation between God and a human being'.<sup>563</sup>

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gathering the wheat into the granary and burning the chaff; and my added expectation (6) he is a human being.

<sup>560</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 222-254.

<sup>561</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 34-35; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 371, and Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 287-288, all express uncertainty when it comes to identifying the coming one.

<sup>562</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 201; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 33-34; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 369; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 313; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 283.

<sup>563</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 369. See also Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 202; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 34; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 313; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 284.

John H. Hughes, however, suggests that these arguments ‘are not so impressive as they might at first appear’ and offers a series of rebuttals to them.<sup>564</sup> Yet, when I consider Hughes’s rebuttals, it does not appear as though he has done much to counter the objections against seeing God as the coming figure.

For example, Hughes states that ‘the very fact that God is not referred to explicitly would have done much to avoid the possibility of John giving offence through making a comparison between himself and the Deity’.<sup>565</sup> However, if the Baptist intended for those around him to understand that the coming one was God, then I fail to see how any offense would have been avoided.<sup>566</sup> Hughes goes on to contend that it is ‘entirely possible’ that the Baptist made this comparison, ‘or rather contrast’, between himself and God, seeing as the Baptist was attempting to emphasize ‘the substantial difference between his own water baptism and God’s baptism with holy spirit and fire’.<sup>567</sup> But as Webb observes, ‘the contrast is already quite clear from the descriptions of the two baptisms, as well as the use of the emphatic pronouns ἐγὼ...αὐτός as well as the contrasting conjunctions μὲν...δέ (Q3.16; Mk 1.7-8)’.<sup>568</sup> Moreover, Webb contends that it remains the case that ‘however the statement is mitigated, it is in fact a comparison between the *persons* of John and the expected figure, not just their baptisms’, and he goes on to state that ‘the comparative implies that John is actually a mighty figure, and that the expected figure is still mightier. *The statement is a comparative one, and it should not be interpreted as if it were contrastive*’.<sup>569</sup>

Hughes also argues that Ps. 60.8 and Ps. 108.9 demonstrate that describing God as wearing sandals is appropriate, contrary to the above argument against identifying the coming figure as God. However, the Baptist’s saying is not merely descriptive of the coming one’s footwear. Rather, it is an ‘evaluative statement of his own unworthiness to

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<sup>564</sup> John H. Hughes, ‘John the Baptist: The Forerunner of God Himself’, *Novum Testamentum* 14, no. 3 (1972), 196. See also Keener, *Historical Jesus of the Gospels*, 168-169.

<sup>565</sup> Hughes, ‘John the Baptist’, 196.

<sup>566</sup> In fact, if those who heard the Baptist’s preaching would have so easily identified the coming one as God based on the Baptist’s description, as Hughes seems to imply throughout his article, then how else would one expect the Baptist to refer to God? One would certainly not expect the Baptist to refer to God by name.

<sup>567</sup> Hughes, ‘John the Baptist’, 197.

<sup>568</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 285.

<sup>569</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 285 (my emphasis).

perform an action with respect to this figure's sandals'.<sup>570</sup> Thus, Hughes, in my opinion, ultimately fails to deal adequately with the arguments against identifying God as the coming figure of the Baptist's preaching.<sup>571</sup>

Having noted the weaknesses of Hughes's rebuttals, it should, in closing, be recalled that the Baptist apparently believed that Jesus might be this coming figure, which indicates clearly to me that the figure could not have been God. For all of these reasons, I do not believe it to be likely that the coming figure of the Baptist's preaching was God.

### *The Son of Man and Melchizedek*

For very similar reasons, it would be difficult to conclude that the coming one was an angelic or heavenly figure, i.e., Melchizedek or the heavenly Son of Man. The Baptist believed this figure would be a human being, and therefore it is unlikely to have been a heavenly or angelic figure.<sup>572</sup> Furthermore, these hypotheses are also confronted with the problem of what to do with the Baptist's statement that he is not worthy to loose this figure's sandals and his comparison of himself with this coming one. Finally, when considering the suggestion that Melchizedek is the coming figure, it should be noted that

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<sup>570</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 284. Webb continues, 'The evaluation of John's unworthiness to perform such an action loses some of its significance if it is an action which it is impossible for him to actually do'. See also Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 34: 'A metaphor presenting John untying God's shoelaces seems to go beyond the bounds of any OT example'.

<sup>571</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 34, summarizes the evidence against identifying the coming figure as God so well that I think is worth quoting in detail: 'To be sure, in the OT and intertestamental literature, God is *the* stronger one, indeed the Almighty. But it makes no sense whatsoever for John to stress that God is "the one stronger than I," especially with regard to the final judgment. Who would have thought otherwise? Liturgy and preaching can certainly employ veiled references or solemn circumlocutions for God. But for John to use "the one stronger than I" as a veiled name for the God he has directly and plainly referred to just a few verses ago (at least in the Q material in Matt. 3:9 par.) seems downright silly.... The interpretation of the stronger one as God threatens to border on the nonsensical when the sentence continues with the affirmation that John is not worthy to untie the strap on the sandals of the stronger one. Granted, the OT does at times use the metaphor of God's shoe (Pss. 60:10; 108:10), though the metaphor is rare and occurs in an entirely different context (the subjugation of enemy territory). A metaphor presenting John untying God's shoelaces seems to go beyond the bounds of any OT example. More to the point, it is an incredibly contorted way of proclaiming the mind-boggling truism that God is superior to John. Finally, to place in parallelism two acts of baptizing, John's and the stronger one's, is extremely strange if the stronger one is God. Why would there be any need to stress that whatever God does, including baptism (an odd action on God's part), would be superior to John's action in the same vein? Hence it is likely that "the stronger one" does contain a veiled reference to some figure in the eschatological drama other than God'.

<sup>572</sup> Dunn concludes, 'That the question could be posed in regard to Jesus presumably confirms the unlikelihood that John had in mind God or the Son of Man' (*Jesus Remembered*, 371).

his role appears to be quite different than that of the coming one. Webb does precisely this when he observes that, although Melchizedek is a figure of judgment and restoration, ‘the focus of that judgment is neither upon Israel nor their human enemies, but upon their angelic enemies’.<sup>573</sup> Thus, neither the heavenly Son of Man nor Melchizedek is likely to be the Baptist’s coming one.

### *Elijah Redivivus*

The Elijah *redivivus* identification presents significant problems as well. As demonstrated above, the Baptist viewed his role as a preparatory one; there would be a figure who would come after him, be mightier than he, and bring the decisive judgment and restoration. Yet, this seems to be precisely the preparatory role that is attributed to Elijah *redivivus* himself.<sup>574</sup> As Davies and Allison put it, ‘Against (5) [i.e., the hypothesis that the coming one is Elijah *redivivus*], the notion of the forerunner of a forerunner is perhaps not a happy one’.<sup>575</sup> The more significant problem with this identification, however, is that the coming one’s role is *not* a preparatory one; rather, he brings the final restoration and judgment. Thus, even Webb, who is hesitant to say which figure the Baptist believed would come after him, concludes that ‘there is little evidence’ that Elijah *redivivus* fits the Baptist’s description of the coming one.<sup>576</sup>

### *The Aaronic Messiah*

Perhaps the identification that is least supported by the evidence is that of the Aaronic Messiah. It is highly unlikely that the Aaronic Messiah was a figure of judgment in the sense that the coming one is, if he was even a figure of judgment at all.<sup>577</sup> Furthermore, the most significant activities associated with Aaronic Messiah, such as ritual duties or presiding over the messianic banquet,<sup>578</sup> are not present in the Baptist’s announcement of the coming one. If the Aaronic Messiah were the figure the Baptist had in mind, it is odd that the Baptist would emphasize a coming judgment that

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<sup>573</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 241.

<sup>574</sup> Mal. 3.1, 5; 4.5-6.

<sup>575</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 313.

<sup>576</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 254.

<sup>577</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 237.

<sup>578</sup> See, e.g., 1QSa 2.11-21.

probably was not associated with this figure but have nothing to say about the sorts of ritual and administrative activities that were so explicitly associated with him.

### *The Davidic Messiah*

In contrast to the aforementioned figures, arguments against identifying the coming one as the Davidic Messiah are lacking, whereas the evidence in favor of this identification is quite strong.<sup>579</sup> Dunn's concerns are that there was no 'clear-cut or simple expectation of "the Messiah" in Second Temple Judaism' and that 'messianic expectation did not *usually* envisage a figure of fire, as we see in the most likely precedent (in the *Psalms of Solomon*) for such an expectation'.<sup>580</sup> However, that a figure of fire is not 'usually' envisaged in messianic expectations should not cause concern. According to Webb's survey, every figure under consideration, with the possible exception of God, is missing a number of features found in the Baptist's description.<sup>581</sup> Therefore, unless one argues that in order for any one of these figures to be identified as the coming one that figure's description must contain every feature of the Baptist's preaching, Dunn's observation is not problematic. More importantly, as I noted above, it is the nature of the roles of the various possible figures listed above and how well they align with the role of the coming one that matters, rather than whether they share every attribute of the coming figure, and it seems to me that the Davidic messianic role aligns very well with that of the Baptist's coming figure.<sup>582</sup> For, although Dunn is correct to say that there were no clear-cut expectations for 'the Messiah', there was a fairly common expectation that the Davidic Messiah would be a human agent who would play an active and integral role in the restoration and judgment of Israel,<sup>583</sup> and this appears to be the very role assigned to the coming figure. It is probable, therefore, that the Baptist either went the unusual route and used fire imagery to describe the Davidic Messiah's judgment, or that, seeing as fire imagery is used to describe God's judgment,

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<sup>579</sup> After considering numerous figures, Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 313-314, conclude that the Baptist's coming one is most likely the Davidic Messiah.

<sup>580</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 371 (my emphasis).

<sup>581</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 259.

<sup>582</sup> It at least does so far better than the other figures considered above.

<sup>583</sup> See 3.4.1 above.

he ‘announce[d] God’s imminent action in judgment and salvation, which will be accomplished by a plenipotentiary who is coming soon’.<sup>584</sup>

Whereas Dunn offers objections to identifying the coming figure as the Davidic Messiah, it appears as though neither Webb nor Meier offer any significant objections against identifying the coming one as the Davidic Messiah. Each removes God and an angelic or heavenly figure from consideration because of Luke 7.18-32/Matt. 11.2-6 and the Baptist’s comparison of himself with the coming one,<sup>585</sup> and both note the aforementioned difficulty with identifying the coming one as Elijah *redivivus*, i.e., one would have a preparatory figure announcing the coming of a preparatory figure.<sup>586</sup> But neither specifically argues against, nor offers serious objections to, identifying this figure as the Davidic Messiah, even though they remain hesitant when it comes to identifying the coming figure.<sup>587</sup>

In the end, therefore, when all the arguments, and lack thereof, concerning the identity of the coming one are considered, I think it is probable that the Baptist announced the imminent coming of the Davidic Messiah.<sup>588</sup>

## **5.9 The Baptist’s Identification of Jesus**

If demonstrating that the Baptist announced the coming of the Davidic Messiah was a difficult task, then one might consider an attempt to offer persuasive reasons for believing that he also identified Jesus as this figure to be, in the politest terms, overly ambitious. However, when one considers four particular historical data from the Gospels, one finds that the hypothesis that the Baptist identified Jesus as the coming figure and that the Twelve began to follow Jesus as the Davidic Messiah on the basis of this identification offers an historically plausible explanation of all of the data, that it

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<sup>584</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 203.

<sup>585</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 284-287; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 34-35. Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 314, list no objections to the Davidic Messiah identification and note that fewer objections can be made against this figure than any other.

<sup>586</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 34-35; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 250-254. See also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 370-371; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 313.

<sup>587</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 34-35; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 287-288. I do not consider this to be unreasonable at all, even though I believe that one can be more confident than they are in identifying the coming one.

<sup>588</sup> Davies and Allison conclude their discussion by suggesting that “if Jn 1.26 implies that the Baptist believed in a hidden Messiah (so Dodd, *Tradition*, 266-9; Brown *John I*, 52-54), this would clinch the argument” (*Matthew I-VII*, 314).

does so with simplicity, that it has broader explanatory power, and that it does all of this better than its alternative(s).

The four particular historical Gospel data that I have in mind are: (1) The Baptist proclaimed the arrival of the Davidic Messiah (Lk. 3.15-18/Mt. 3.11-12; cf. Mk 1.7-8; Jn 1.26-27). (2) Some of the Baptist's disciples became disciples of Jesus (Jn 1.35-51). (3) The Baptist asked Jesus whether he was the coming figure about whom he preached (Lk. 7.18-23/Mt. 11.2-6). (4) Jesus answered a question about the source of his authority by referring to the Baptist's divine authority (Mk 11.27-33; cf. Jn 5.31-35). Before considering the various hypotheses that could be advanced to explain these data, I think it would be helpful first to discuss them in more detail, particularly the reasons for believing each datum is historical.

*Datum 1) The Baptist Proclaimed the Arrival of the Davidic Messiah (Lk. 3.15-18/Mt. 3.11-12; cf. Mk 1.7-8; Jn 1.26-27)*

The reasons for believing that the Baptist announced the arrival of the Davidic Messiah have been laid out in detail above.<sup>589</sup> Thus, I will simply state here that this is one of the four data that I consider to be in need of an explanation.

*Datum 2) Some of the Baptist's Disciples Became Disciples of Jesus (Jn 1.35-51)*

In John 1.35-51, it is reported that some of those who would come to make up the Twelve were originally followers of the Baptist prior to becoming disciples of Jesus:

Again on the next day, John had stood with two of his disciples, and having seen Jesus walking about he says, 'Behold the lamb of God'. And the two disciples heard him speaking and followed Jesus. And having turned and seen them following him, Jesus says to them, 'What are you seeking?' And they said to him, 'Rabbi', which is translated 'Teacher', 'where do you dwell?' He says to them, 'Come and see'. Therefore they went and saw where he dwells and they remained with him that day; it was about the tenth hour. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two having heard John and having followed him. He first finds his own brother Simon and says to him, 'We have found the Messiah', which is translated 'Christ'. He led him to Jesus. Having looked at him, Jesus said, 'You are Simon the son of John, you will be called Kephas, meaning Peter. On the next day, he desired to go out to Galilee and finds Philip. And Jesus says to him, 'Follow me'. And Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip finds Nathanael and says to him, 'We have found the one of whom Moses wrote in the law and the prophets, Jesus the son of Joseph, the one from Nazareth'. And Nathan said to him, 'Can something out of Nazareth be good?' Philip says to him, 'Come and see'. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and concerning him he says,

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<sup>589</sup> See 5.7-5.8.2 above.



‘Behold, truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit’. Nathan says to him, ‘From where do you know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called to you, I saw you under the fig tree. Nathanael answered him, ‘Rabbi, you are the son of God, you are the king of Israel’. Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Because I said to you that I saw you sitting under the fig tree, you believe? You will see greater things than this’. And he says to him, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see, heaven having been opened, even the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man’.

Many scholars have concluded that John’s claim that some of the Baptist’s disciples became disciples of Jesus is historically credible, even though the account is probably significantly theologized. There are two reasons in particular why this is so. First, however one wishes to deal with the apparent differences between the Synoptics’ and John’s accounts of the call of the first disciples, ‘[p]sychologically it may well be that some such contact as is here recorded is almost the necessary prelude to the far-reaching call narrated by the Synoptists, with its requirement that the called abandon everything for Jesus’.<sup>590</sup> Luke’s account appears to confirm this. As Brown notes, ‘Luke seems embarrassed as to why these men should follow Jesus on first contact, and he changes the Marcan order of the material in order to make the scene more reasonable’.<sup>591</sup> Therefore, ‘John’s information is quite plausible, as the very awkwardness of the Synoptic account might indicate’.<sup>592</sup> Second, Acts 1.21-22 appears to provide further support for the Gospel of John’s account, particularly when Acts is read alongside Luke. Reading Luke one might believe that Jesus called the first disciples only subsequent to his return to Galilee after having been baptized.<sup>593</sup> However, when one reads Acts 1.21-22 one discovers that Luke is aware that ‘the first disciples actually had joined Jesus at the time of his baptism’.<sup>594</sup> In these verses Luke explains that one of the requirements for Judas’s replacement was that he had to have been ‘one of the men accompanying us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, *beginning from the baptism of John* until the day on which he was taken up from us’.<sup>595</sup> Because Luke’s statement here in Acts differs from the account he provides in his own Gospel, Brown

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<sup>590</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 136.

<sup>591</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 77.

<sup>592</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 77.

<sup>593</sup> Luke 5.1-11.

<sup>594</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 77.

<sup>595</sup> Acts 1.21-22.

reasonably concludes that ‘there is every reason to take it seriously’.<sup>596</sup> This evidence has led to broad agreement that it is probable that Jesus’ first disciples were initially followers of the Baptist.<sup>597</sup>

*Datum 3) The Baptist Asked Jesus If He Was the Coming Figure (Lk. 7.18-23/Mt. 11.2-6)*

This datum, too, has been discussed in some detail above.<sup>598</sup> Therefore, I will simply note again here that it is likely that the Baptist asked Jesus if he was the coming figure of his preaching.

*Datum 4) Jesus Answered a Question About the Source of His Authority by Referring to the Baptist’s Divine Authority (Mk 11.27-33)*

It is probable that there is an historical core underlying Mark 11.27-33:

And they come again into Jerusalem. And walking about in the Temple, the chief priests and scribes and leaders come and were saying to him, ‘By what authority do you do these things? Or who gave you the authority that you should do these things?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘I will ask you one question; just answer me and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John of heaven or of men? Answer me.’ And they were discussing with each other saying, ‘If we should say, “of heaven”, he will say, “Then why did you not believe him?” But should we say, “of men”?’ They were

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<sup>596</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 77. A third reason for accepting the historicity of the disciples’ movement from the Baptist to Jesus can be added to these two. I think Meier is probably correct when he argues that there is a certain degree of embarrassment in Jesus’ first disciples having formerly been followers of the Baptist. He writes, ‘Granted the theological program of the Fourth Evangelist, it is difficult to imagine him making up the story that some of the most important disciples of Jesus had first chosen the Baptist as their master and that they then gravitated to Jesus without Jesus taking any initiative. Needless to say, the Baptist’s recognition of Jesus as the preexistent Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is Christian theology of the Johannine brand, as is also the presentation of John urging his disciples to follow Jesus. Yet when all the Johannine theology is stripped away, an embarrassing and surprising fact remains – a fact one would have never guessed from the Synoptic presentation: some of the most important disciples of Jesus first gave their allegiance to the Baptist, and only after a while transferred it to Jesus, whom they first met in the Baptist’s circle’ (Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 120).

<sup>597</sup> See, e.g., Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 300; Brown, *John I-XII*, 77-78; Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 47; Morris, *John*, 155; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978 [1955]), 179; Charles H. H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 146; Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 367; W. Barnes Tatum, *John the Baptist and Jesus: A Report of the Jesus Seminar* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1994), 151-153; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 36; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 351. Lüdemann, *Jesus*, 431, however, still expresses doubts about John’s account: ‘But we should note that the evangelist – even more strongly than the Synoptists – pursues the interest of emphasizing the inferiority of John to Jesus (cf. 1.6-8; 1.19-34; 3.22-30; 5.33f.). It is in keeping with this purpose that the Baptist has to yield his disciples to Jesus (cf. 3.30: ‘he must increase, but I must decrease’).’ The weight of all of the evidence, however, suggests that John was using an authentic tradition in 1.35-51 to suite his purposes rather than fabricating one.

<sup>598</sup> See pp. 136-139 above.

afraid of the crowd; for all held that John was indeed a prophet. And having answered Jesus, they say, ‘We do not know’. And Jesus says to them, ‘Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things’.

The historical core of this account likely included a question about the authority by which Jesus was doing ‘these things’ (Ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιεῖς; ἢ τίς σοι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἵνα ταῦτα ποιῇς;) and Jesus’ counter-question asking whether the Baptist’s baptism ‘was from heaven or from men’ (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἢν ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων),<sup>599</sup> as it seems unlikely that ‘the early church would present [the Baptist’s] authority in any way equal to or superior to that of Jesus as is implied in v 30’.<sup>600</sup> The authenticity of Jesus’ appeal to the Baptist, and evidence of its potential embarrassment, is strengthened when one considers what appears to be an independent attestation of this tradition in John 5.30-35 and its preceding context. In the midst of opponents confronting Jesus ‘because he was doing these things on the Sabbath’ (ὅτι ταῦτα ἐποίει ἐν σαββάτῳ)<sup>601</sup> and Jesus in turn claiming that the Father gave him ‘authority’ (ἐξουσίαν) to execute judgment, Jesus appeals to witnesses who have testified on his behalf in order to justify his behavior. One of these witnesses, as in Mk 11.27-33, is the Baptist. Yet, notice how there appears to be some level of uneasiness in acknowledging that Jesus appeals to the Baptist to claim his authority to do the things that he was doing:

You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. *And I, myself, do not accept the testimony of men, but I say these things in order that you might be saved* (ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου τὴν μαρτυρίαν λαμβάνω, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα λέγω ἵνα ὑμεῖς σωθῇτε). He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a time in his light. But I have a testimony greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given to me in order that I should complete them, the same works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. And the Father, having sent me, has himself testified on my behalf.<sup>602</sup>

The multiple attestation, as well as the likely embarrassment of Jesus’ appeal to the Baptist as the source of his authority, thus leads me to believe that this datum is

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<sup>599</sup> ‘Heaven’ being a circumlocution for ‘God’ (Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, vol. 2, 211).

<sup>600</sup> Gam Seng Shae, ‘The Question on the Authority of Jesus’, *Novum Testamentum* 16 (1974), 15. See also, Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, vol. 2, (EKK; Zürich: Beziger, 1979), who notes that ‘Manche Autoren werten den Rückgriff auf die Johannaustaufe als Begründung für die Vollmacht Jesu als Signum dafür, daß eine historische Situation des Lebens Jesu eingefangen sei’.

<sup>601</sup> That is, telling a man to get up and carry his mat after healing him (Jn 5.16).

<sup>602</sup> John 5.33-37.

historical. With these data in mind, one may consider the hypothesis I offered above to explain them and compare it to its alternative(s).

### **5.10 The Hypotheses**

#### *My Hypothesis*

The hypothesis I proposed above not only makes sense of, and incorporates, all of the data, but it does so with simplicity and historical credibility. One can imagine a plausible historical scenario in which the Baptist was awaiting the Davidic Messiah (datum 1), identified Jesus as this figure, and, consequently, had some of his disciples leave him to follow Jesus (datum 2). This hypothesis would also make sense of the Baptist's question from prison (datum 3). The Baptist expected Jesus to bring imminent eschatological judgment, but there was no sign of such judgment in Jesus' ministry. Consequently, the Baptist asks Jesus whether he is the one to come or if he should wait for another. Finally, this hypothesis explains why Jesus traces his authority back to the Baptist when challenged (datum 4). The Baptist identified Jesus as the coming Davidic Messiah, and if the Baptist is indeed a prophet of God, then Jesus can claim full authority to do 'these things'.

Furthermore, this hypothesis appears to possess broader explanatory power on two accounts. First, as noted above, it is likely that Jesus' first disciples left the Baptist to follow Jesus. Explanations as to why the disciples began to follow Jesus, however, are lacking. This is a significant question, though, particularly in light of the honor-shame culture in which the Baptist and Jesus lived, and it thus demands an answer. For disciples to leave one leader (the Baptist), and thus leave what was likely considered their fictive kinship group, in order to follow another leader (Jesus), and thus enter a different fictive kinship group, one would expect something significant to have happened; something must have served as the catalyst for this movement. Moreover, given that the disciples attached themselves to Jesus as their new leader, Jesus must have gained a good deal of honor prior to this event, and it seems as though this honor would not have been ascribed to him on the basis of his family or hometown.<sup>603</sup> Therefore, this honor must have been ascribed to him by another honorable person or acquired through

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<sup>603</sup> See, e.g., Mark 6.1-5 and pars.; John 1.46.

his interactions with others, interactions which Jesus ‘won’, as it were.<sup>604</sup> This hypothesis provides both the much-needed catalyst for the disciples’ decision to move from one leader to another, and it explains how Jesus gained the honor that was likely necessary in this scenario: Jesus’ honor was ascribed to him by the Baptist in the form of his identifying Jesus as the Davidic Messiah, and on account of this, the Baptist’s disciples left him to follow Jesus.

Second, this hypothesis helps one to understand why it was that Jesus even began his own (eschatological) ministry.<sup>605</sup> Consider what it might have meant for Jesus if he had been identified by the Baptist as the coming Davidic Messiah, and was believed to be so by others, in this case the Baptist’s disciples. I discussed above the group-centered nature of Jesus’ culture and its importance for identity and role formation.<sup>606</sup> If Jesus was a disciple of the Baptist, or, alternatively, had any other sort of close association with him,<sup>607</sup> then to be identified as the Davidic Messiah by him and to have this identification reinforced by others would likely have made a significant impact on Jesus. If Jesus’ understanding of his role in Israel’s history was shaped in part because of the Baptist’s identification and others’ reinforcement of that identification, then one has a plausible and economical explanation as to why Jesus began his own (eschatological) ministry. The first hypothesis thus has significant broader explanatory power.

Finally, and the significance of this point should not be taken lightly simply because it is listed lastly here, this hypothesis is one that is supported by a Gospel datum, i.e., it is not one that is based on conjecture. The datum I speak of is John 1.29-34, which states:

The next day he sees Jesus coming to him and says, ‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one about whom I said, “After me comes a man

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<sup>604</sup> For a discussion of honor and kinship, see Malina, *New Testament World*, 25-50, 94-121.

<sup>605</sup> I place ‘eschatological’ in quotations here because there is still debate as to whether Jesus was an eschatological figure, and as I will not be arguing for any particular interpretation of Jesus’ ministry in this dissertation, I am not in a position presently to argue for or against an eschatological outlook on his part.

<sup>606</sup> See 2.1 and 3.2 above.

<sup>607</sup> See the discussions in, e.g., Robert L. Webb, ‘John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus’, in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, eds. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Boston: Brill, 1994), 179-230 (214-219); Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 116-120; Max Aplin, *Was Jesus Ever a Disciple of John the Baptist? A Historical Study* (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2011).

who has a place above me, because he was before me”. And I myself did not know him; but in order that he might be revealed to Israel, for this I came baptizing in water’. And John testified saying, ‘I have seen the spirit descending as a dove from heaven, and it remained upon him. And I myself did not know him, but the one having sent me to baptize in water said to me, “He upon whom you see the spirit descending and remaining, this is the one baptizing in the Holy Spirit”. And I myself have seen and have testified that this one is the Son of God’.<sup>608</sup>

The authenticity of this datum is, of course, believed to be highly questionable, and many have concluded that it has no basis in history. The reasons for doing so are clear. The Gospel of John contains a highly developed christology,<sup>609</sup> and it is almost certainly the case that a significant intention of the author was to portray the Baptist as providing a clear ‘witness’ or ‘testimony’ (μαρτυρία) to Jesus.<sup>610</sup> It is also possible that the Johannine community was in competition with and/or seeking to convince post-Easter followers of the Baptist that Jesus was the Messiah as understood in the Johannine community.<sup>611</sup> As one considers the account in John 1.29-34, one finds that it contains christological affirmations, the Baptist’s ‘witness’ to Jesus, and it can be seen as a polemical account aimed at followers of the Baptist. In other words, the Gospel of John as a whole and this account in particular has clearly been shaped by its author.<sup>612</sup> Many scholars therefore conclude that the event being described, i.e., the Baptist’s identification of Jesus, is probably inauthentic and likely the invention of the author.<sup>613</sup>

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<sup>608</sup> John 1.29-34.

<sup>609</sup> James H. Charlesworth, ‘The Historical Jesus in the Fourth Gospel: A Paradigm Shift?’, *The Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 8.1 (2010), 14, observes, ‘Scholars who dismiss the possibility of reliable Jesus traditions in John often do so at the outset assuming John is unreliable historically because it is so highly developed theologically and christologically’.

<sup>610</sup> See Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971 [1964]), 94-95; Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 248; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1 (London: Burns and Oates, 1968), 284-285; Brown, *John I-XII*, 45; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 196-206.

<sup>611</sup> See Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 88, 90; Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 16; Brown, *John I-XII*, 74; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 187-190. Some scholars have been more critical of this hypothesis than others. See, e.g., George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 23; Francis J. Moloney, ‘The Fourth Gospel and the Jesus of History’, *New Testament Studies* 46 (2000), 49.

<sup>612</sup> As have the other Gospels. As have the majority, if not all, of our ancient and even modern historical sources. See Charlesworth, ‘Historical Jesus in the Fourth Gospel’, 14, esp. n45, where he draws attention to Theissen and Winter’s astute remarks in *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung* (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus, 34; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 12: ‘Da es absolut zuverlässige Quellen jedoch in der menschlichen Geschichte nicht gibt, bleibt selbst bei der besten Quelle die Aufgabe, diese weiter zu untersuchen.’

<sup>613</sup> See, e.g., Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 94-95; Maurice Casey, *Is John’s Gospel True?* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 63, 71. See also Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 170, who writes: ‘In section III of this

However, one must be careful not to mistake these observations for sufficient reasons to conclude that the event portrayed in John 1.29-34 is wholly inauthentic, even though one is justifiably much more suspicious at this point because of them. After all, there is no reason why John could not have drawn upon an historical event and heavily shaped it in order to serve any of his purposes. Meier makes an excellent observation along these lines in his analysis of Luke 7.18-23/Matt. 11.2-6:

The very fact that this tradition was later preserved in Q and then in Matthew and Luke shows that the early church found a use for it in its preaching, apologetics and polemics (e.g., dialogue and debate with Baptist sectarians). But Matt 11:2-6 par. is a striking reminder that to suggest or discern the *Sitz im Leben* of a pericope in the life of the early church is not to prove that such a *Sitz im Leben* was the original *Sitz im Leben* of the material. Hence the question that concerns us throughout this book is not whether a pericope had a *Sitz im Leben* in the early church; by definition, its inclusion in a Gospel makes it very likely that it did. The question is whether there are indications that the tradition had an earlier *Sitz im Leben* in the life of Jesus.<sup>614</sup>

Therefore, if this datum can be incorporated into and play an essential role in a hypothesis that provides the best explanation of the four data discussed above, then one may reasonably conclude that John's theologically shaped account had its origins in the life of the Baptist and Jesus. The hypothesis I am advancing therefore is both supported by this datum and serves to affirm its basic historicity;<sup>615</sup> it allows us to incorporate data rather than having to eliminate them, and having a datum upon which to formulate one's hypothesis is quite valuable, in my view, as a data-based hypothesis is, with all things being equal, preferable to one based solely on conjecture.

The first hypothesis, then, explains these four data in an economical yet historically credible manner; it is an hypothesis that is based on extant Gospel data rather than conjecture and allows one to incorporate data rather than eliminating them;

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chapter we examined the key data that critical analysis can extricate from the highly Christianized picture of the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel: namely, that for a short period Jesus was probably a close disciple of the Baptist, that he may have drawn some of his own close disciples from the Baptist's circle, and that he continued John's practice of baptism. *Almost everything else in the fourth Evangelist's portrait of the Baptist must be assigned to the author's desire to make the Baptist a key witness to the Word made flesh (John 1:15,30), the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29)*' (my emphasis).

<sup>614</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 203n109. Ironically, Meier might be guilty of the very offense against which he warns here when it comes to the question of whether there is an historical core underlying John 1.29-34.

<sup>615</sup> By 'basic historicity', I mean simply the event of the Baptist identifying Jesus as the coming figure, rather than the specifics of the account, such as the Baptist's particular words or whether anyone experienced a vision of some sort.

and it appears to possess significant broader explanatory power. Thus, it bears all the marks of a good hypothesis.

### *The Alternative Hypothesis*

The alternative, competing hypothesis to be considered here is that the Baptist did not identify Jesus as the Davidic Messiah about whom he preached. This hypothesis could easily explain the first datum by positing that the Baptist did, indeed, announce the coming of the Davidic Messiah. It also can explain the Baptist's question to Jesus (datum 3). If Jesus' popularity grew because of what he was saying and doing, then it is plausible that upon hearing about this the Baptist might have picked up on the (eschatological) significance of these things and questioned whether Jesus was the coming one, despite the fact that Jesus' ministry was not what the Baptist expected. If he did, then he probably also wondered why the eschatological judgment he expected to come imminently had not yet arrived.<sup>616</sup> Meier takes this position and suggests that the Baptist not only would have been asking about the absence of eschatological judgment, 'But now he must either rethink his own prophecy or see it proven totally false. John's question is therefore a genuine, tentative probe, allowing that he might have to revise his hopes in order to avoid giving them up entirely'.<sup>617</sup>

Explaining Jesus' counter-question in Mk 11.27-33 (datum 4) is also possible on this hypothesis. However, it must be taken to mean simply that Jesus was drawing an analogy between the Baptist's authority and his own. In other words, Jesus' counter-question must be interpreted to mean, 'Just as the Baptist's authority came from heaven, so too does mine'.<sup>618</sup> This hypothesis does not, however, explain why some of the disciples of the Baptist left him and began to follow Jesus (datum 2); one would have to posit additional and speculative hypotheses in order to do so.<sup>619</sup>

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<sup>616</sup> See Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 59.

<sup>617</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 133.

<sup>618</sup> See, e.g., Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 204-205; Moloney, 'The Fourth Gospel', 15-16, suggests that Jesus was not actually attempting to provide an answer about his authority, but instead deflected the question so that he would not have to answer it.

<sup>619</sup> Meier's comments reveal the need for such speculation at this point: 'If some disciples of the Baptist came to transfer their allegiance to [Jesus] while they were still in the company of the Baptist, that presumes that Jesus had stayed in the Baptist's orbit long enough for some of the latter's disciples to come to know him and be impressed by him. The particulars of how this happened are lost to us, and the



### *The Preferable Hypothesis*

Having considered these hypotheses, I am convinced that the first hypothesis is to be preferred over the second, as it seems to me to have several significant advantages over it. The first is its explanatory power. It provides an historically credible explanation as to why the Baptist's disciples began to follow Jesus as their new leader, whereas the second hypothesis must posit additional hypotheses and rely on speculation in order to explain the disciples' movement. Moreover, the first hypothesis helps one to understand the catalyst for Jesus' (eschatological) ministry, something that is certainly of importance for historical Jesus research, whereas the second cannot.

Second, the first hypothesis appears to involve less 'psychologizing' to explain the Baptist's question from prison. One does not have to attempt to determine how the Baptist saw Jesus' ministry in relation to his own eschatological outlook (i.e., whether he actually did see enough eschatological significance in what Jesus was doing to ask him if he was the one to come), or whether he began to doubt his own eschatological hopes when faced with Jesus' ministry and believed that he might have to revise them or give them up entirely, as one must do on the second hypothesis. Instead, on the first hypothesis the Baptist's question follows almost necessarily from the available data. If the Baptist did identify Jesus as the coming figure, then he expected him to bring imminent eschatological judgment, but Jesus was not fulfilling this expectation. Therefore, one would fully expect the question, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?'<sup>620</sup>

Third, the first hypothesis seems to offer a better interpretation of Mk 11.27-33. It is difficult to see how those who questioned Jesus would have found a claim on the part of Jesus that his authority was analogous to the Baptist's difficult to refute, as it clearly does not follow that Jesus' authority was from heaven because the Baptist's

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narrative of John 1 is obviously trying to put the best Christian face possible on the train of events. Whatever the details, however, the early traditions lying behind John 1:28-45 do suggest that Jesus remained for a while in the circle of the Baptist's disciples after his own baptism' (*Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 120).

<sup>620</sup> It also seems more likely to me, if I were to psychologize, that the Baptist would sooner doubt his identification of Jesus than doubt his own eschatological outlook entirely.

authority was from heaven, nor because Jesus was baptized by him.<sup>621</sup> Instead, the logical implication of Jesus' counter-question would seem to indicate that the Baptist authorized Jesus in some way.<sup>622</sup> Therefore, the reasoning behind Jesus' counter-question must have, in my opinion, gone as proposed on the first hypothesis: the Baptist's authority is from God, the Baptist authorized Jesus, and therefore, Jesus has the authority to do what he is doing.

Fourth, and finally, the first hypothesis relies on data in order to establish its historical narrative rather than conjecture. Rather than having to resort to speculation, John 1.29-34 provides one with an extant datum that establishes an historically plausible, and economical, historical narrative that draws together the four historical data considered above. The second hypothesis, however, does not allow one to do this.

For all of these reasons, then, and despite the fact that it is quite controversial, I am convinced that the first hypothesis is to be preferred, and thus that it is likely that the Baptist not only proclaimed the imminent coming of the Davidic Messiah, but that he also identified Jesus as the fulfillment of his proclamation and that at least some of those who came to make up the Twelve began to follow Jesus as the Davidic Messiah on the basis of this identification.<sup>623</sup>

### **5.11 So, When In the Pre-Easter Period?**

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<sup>621</sup> See Gundry, *Mark*, 668: As Gundry puts it, none of this would 'confer such authority [upon Jesus], nor would it have been accepted as doing so. Otherwise, every Tom, Dick, and Harry baptized by John could have claimed similar authority and been acknowledged as possessing it.'

<sup>622</sup> See the discussion in Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 796-800.

<sup>623</sup> Two other alternative hypotheses, I will call them hypotheses 3 and 4, that one might also consider are (3) that the Baptist authorized Jesus as something of a right-hand man (For this, see Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus: History and Hypotheses', *New Testament Studies* 36 [1990], 359-374), but not as the coming one, or (4) that the Baptist identified Jesus a successor of some sort, perhaps even as the Elisha to the Baptist's Elijah, but not as the coming one. Both of these hypotheses may be seen as variations on the first hypothesis, assuming that the Baptist's identification of Jesus as his right-hand man or successor was the event on which the narrative in Jn 1.29-34 was based. Both, however, fail to supplant the first hypothesis as the best, as they both must rely heavily on speculation. For example, one must conjecture without data that the Baptist appointed a right-hand man or successor. In the case of hypothesis 4, one would have to speculate as to why the Baptist, who expected the imminent coming of the eschatological figure, would feel the need to appoint a successor. Furthermore, as with hypothesis 2, on both hypotheses one must speculate about why the Baptist asked Jesus if he was the 'coming one'. Why would the Baptist have begun to consider Jesus, his right-hand man or successor, as a possible candidate for the role of the coming eschatological figure? In the end, hypothesis 1 remains preferable to all three alternatives in my opinion.

Returning to the question that began this section, I would have to say that the Twelve's belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship appears to have gone back to the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. At least some of the Twelve had been followers of the Baptist and had begun to follow Jesus as the Davidic Messiah because the Baptist identified him as this figure, and it might even be the case that they recruited others on the basis of this belief, as the writer of the Gospel of John claims in 1.40-41, 45-46.<sup>624</sup> Thus, it would seem that some or all of those who came to make up the Twelve followed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah from the very earliest periods of his ministry.<sup>625</sup>

### **5.12 The Twelve's View of Jesus**

The traditions examined in this chapter have yielded valuable historical information regarding the Twelve's view of Jesus. It seems as though at least some of those who would come to make up the Twelve began to follow Jesus because they believed that he was the Davidic Messiah, and it is not unreasonable to believe that the others among the Twelve probably did so for the same reason. At some point later in Jesus' ministry, Peter, apparently acting as a spokesman for the rest of the Twelve, expressed to Jesus the Twelve's view that he was the Davidic Messiah, and it seems as though this view of Jesus was also the catalyst for James and John's request for seats at his right and left. The Davidic Messianic hopes of the Twelve, and probably of others among Jesus' following as well, seem to have reached a climax as Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, when they were acclaiming him as their king, the Davidic Messiah. Lastly, Luke 24.13-35 and Acts 1.6 demonstrate that as a result of Jesus' crucifixion, the Twelve's pre-Easter Davidic Messianic expectations for Jesus were crushed, only to be ignited again by the appearance of the risen Jesus.

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<sup>624</sup> Whatever theological development John might have engaged in when writing this account, I am inclined to agree with Dodd, though not entirely for the same reasons, when he states that John has presented here 'a dramatic and symbolic picture of the total process' (*Historical Tradition*, 301).

<sup>625</sup> Once again, I am aware that many might not be convinced that what I have proposed here is the case. I will take this into consideration when I discuss the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve below and offer to these readers other reasons for concluding that belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship arose earlier rather than later in his ministry, even if not at this earliest stage of it.

Having determined that the Twelve viewed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah early on and throughout his ministry, I turn my attention to determining how Jesus behaved throughout the time that he was viewed as such.

## **Chapter 6**

### ***Jesus' Potential Davidic Messianic Ministry***

#### **6.1 Jesus' Potential Davidic Messianic Behavior**

In the previous chapter I offered reasons for believing that the Twelve probably considered Jesus to be the Davidic Messiah early on and throughout his ministry. In this chapter, I would like to suggest that for as long as Jesus was believed to be the Davidic Messiah he was engaging in behavior that may be described as potentially Davidic messianic, i.e., he was doing and saying things that were in line with the Davidic Messianic role, regardless of whether he intended them to be understood this way. Thus, it may be said that his behavior was consistent with the Twelve's view of him.

#### **6.2 Preliminary Indications of Potential Davidic Messianic Behavior**

As was the case with the Twelve's view of Jesus, even before one looks at the Gospel traditions, one finds that there is good reason to believe that from early on and

throughout his ministry Jesus' behavior was potentially Davidic messianic and thus consistent with the Twelve's view of him. As I reasoned earlier, the Twelve's view of Jesus is itself a very strong indication of this. If the Twelve viewed Jesus as the Davidic Messiah early on and throughout his ministry, then it follows from this that Jesus must have said and done enough things that were sufficiently in line with Davidic messianic expectations to raise and sustain this view; otherwise I would find the Twelve's belief that he was the Davidic Messiah to be incomprehensible.<sup>626</sup>

When one turns one's attention to specific traditions in the Gospels, one finds that there are, in fact, many things that Jesus said and did throughout his ministry that would have been very much in line with the Davidic messianic role, and, thus, quite consistent with the Twelve's Davidic messianic view of him. I will begin with what I see as the most historically secure potential Davidic messianic behavior and work from there.

### **6.3 The Kingdom of God**

Scholars have dedicated enormous amounts of space to discussing the meaning of the kingdom of God in Jesus' preaching.<sup>627</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, however, simply noting two straightforward and uncontroversial conclusions regarding Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God will suffice.

The first conclusion is that Jesus did, in fact, preach about 'the kingdom of God'. This is something that is widely accepted among scholars. The primary reason for this is the impressive widespread attestation of Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God; it is

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<sup>626</sup> At most, one could argue that the Twelve thoroughly misunderstood what Jesus was saying and doing, but I would consider it quite odd to suggest that Jesus did not *at least* do and say *potential* Davidic messianic things.

<sup>627</sup> For relatively recent survey of scholarship, see Bruce Chilton, 'The Kingdom of God in Recent Discussion', in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, eds. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994): 255-280. See also, Robinson, 'Jesus' "Rhetoric": The Rise and Fall of "The Kingdom of God"', in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 4, *Individual Studies*, eds. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 3201-3220.

found in all layers of the sources and in a wide variety of forms.<sup>628</sup> In addition to this, scholars would point to the historical plausibility of Jesus' kingdom of God message along with the somewhat uncommon manner in which he preached this message. In particular, it is noted that there are relatively few mentions of the precise phrase 'the kingdom of God' in Jewish and early Christian texts.<sup>629</sup> But it is primarily the plausibility and substantial attestation of Jesus' preaching that makes it difficult to doubt its historicity.

The second uncontroversial conclusion is that such preaching was potentially messianic.<sup>630</sup> As illustrated above, Davidic messianic expectations included the belief that part of God's establishing his rule over the earth included the raising up and enthronement of the Davidic Messiah; it was believed by many that God's rule will be enacted through his plenipotentiary and viceroy, the Davidic Messiah. If Jesus went about authoritatively preaching the kingdom of God, then it is certainly plausible to think that his behavior could be construed by others, including the Twelve, as an indication of his Davidic messianic status.<sup>631</sup> One may therefore confidently conclude that Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God would have been consistent with the Twelve's view of him.

#### **6.4 Favoring the Poor and Vulnerable**

Scholars are as equally certain that Jesus focused his ministry on the poor and vulnerable. It, like Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God, is simply too widespread

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<sup>628</sup> See, e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 139: 'It is beyond doubt that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom. We know this not from analyzing any one saying or group of sayings, but from noting the ubiquity of the theme "kingdom". We should especially note that...the word "kingdom" is applied to a large range of conceptions in the sayings material attributed to Jesus'. See also Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 265-266; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 237-238; Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 100-102. Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, like many, does not appear even to dedicate space to demonstrating the historicity of Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God. He instead simply attempts to interpret this preaching. For a helpful catalogue of the occurrences of 'kingdom of God', see Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 165-168.

<sup>629</sup> See Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, 238-239; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 385-387.

<sup>630</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 627, notes: 'It is *a priori* likely that an individual who spoke memorably of God's kingdom, who gathered disciples around him, and who created something of a stir would have raised in many minds the equivalent to the modern question "Who does he think he is?" It should now be clear that "claimant to royal messiahship" was one possible answer to be considered'.

<sup>631</sup> Once again, I should stress that this is not the only possible interpretation and that I am not arguing that this is how Jesus understood his preaching. What is important to note at this point is simply that Jesus' preaching about the kingdom of God was potentially messianic.

and plausible to be doubted.<sup>632</sup> Thus, it will suffice simply to talk about the messianic potential of this behavior.

This behavior by Jesus was likewise in line with the Davidic messianic role. As observed above, there is a strong expectation that the Davidic Messiah would especially favor the poor and vulnerable. If Jesus was consistently doing this, which seems to have been the case, then the Twelve could certainly have considered such behavior to be consistent with their belief that he was the Davidic Messiah; in fact, they likely would have been expecting him to act in this way given the prevalence of this expectation in Davidic messianic speculation. Thus, Jesus' favoring the poor and vulnerable may be considered one of the clearest Davidic messianic aspects of his ministry.

## **6.5 Jesus' Appointment of the Twelve**

Most scholars have concluded that it is highly probable that Jesus appointed twelve of his disciples to form an inner circle. In fact, some consider this to be one of the most historically secure acts of Jesus.<sup>633</sup> However, because some scholars still have doubted its historicity,<sup>634</sup> I will briefly review the reasons why its historicity has been so widely affirmed.

### **6.5.1 The Evidence in Need of an Explanation**

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<sup>632</sup> It is so widely accepted that it is actually difficult to find scholars offering any discussion about the historicity of Jesus' favoring of the poor. Rather, the only issues under discussion are which particular passages one should consider historical and how one should interpret them. See, e.g., Segundo, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, 87-88, 90-94; Borg, *A New Vision*, 135-137; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 270-274; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 516-526; Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*, 208-210; Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 305-308; Pagola, *Jesus*, 111-113.

<sup>633</sup> See Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 507-511, who begins his treatment of this subject by stating, 'Despite some counter-hypotheses (more idiosyncratic than persuasive), few questers have doubted that Jesus drew a circle of twelve disciples round him, a more intimate group than the larger ill-defined group of disciples'. See also, to name but a few scholars who affirm the historicity of Jesus' appointment of the Twelve, Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, vol. 1, (EKK; Zürich: Beziger, 1978), vol. 1, 141-143; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 98-106; Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 27-28; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 128-147; Lüdemann, *Jesus*, 22-23.

<sup>634</sup> See, e.g., Bultmann, *Theology*, 37; Philipp Vielhauer, 'Gottesreich und Menschensohn in der Verkündigung Jesu', in *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Philipp Vielhauer (TB 31; München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1965) 69-71; Walter Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), 68-71; Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 71.

There are various data that are relevant to the question of the historicity of the Twelve.<sup>635</sup> One of these data is that the Twelve are known very early on in the post-Easter period, being referenced in several early and probably independent traditions. Paul mentions the Twelve when he reviews for his Corinthian audience the traditions that he received and passed on to them, namely, that ‘Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve’.<sup>636</sup> Scholars generally agree that this tradition is one that Paul did indeed receive, thus making it a very early one.<sup>637</sup> In addition to Paul’s received tradition, the list of names of the Twelve that is presented in Mark 3.13-19 is believed by many to be a pre-Markan tradition.<sup>638</sup> Also believed to be a pre-Markan tradition is the mention of ‘Judas, one of the twelve’ (εἰς τῶν δώδεκα) in Mark 14.43.<sup>639</sup> Finally, the Q material appears to refer, implicitly at least, to a special group of Twelve disciples following Jesus.<sup>640</sup> All of this suggests that the Twelve were known very early on in the post-Easter period.<sup>641</sup> This

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<sup>635</sup> Much of the data that I present and discuss below has been reviewed by numerous scholars. See, e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 98-106, and Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 128-147, which is a revised presentation of his earlier article, ‘The Circle of the Twelve’. They are the scholars most often cited in discussions about the historicity of Jesus’ appointment of the Twelve.

<sup>636</sup> 1 Cor. 15.3-5.

<sup>637</sup> See John Kloppenborg, ‘An Analysis of the Pre-Pauline Formula in 1 Cor 15:3b-5 in Light of Some Recent Literature’, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 (1978), 351-357.

<sup>638</sup> See Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, vol. 1, (HTKNT; Freiburg: Basel, 1976), 202-203; Gnllka, *Markus*, vol. 1, 137-138; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 265.

<sup>639</sup> See Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, (New York: Doubleday, 1994), vol. 1, 246 and vol. 2, 1504-1505; Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 27-28; Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 996.

<sup>640</sup> Luke 22.30/Matt. 19.28. Luke has, ‘so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel’, whereas Matt. 19.28 writes, ‘Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you that you, having followed me, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, even you will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”’. I would agree with those, like Meier and Witherington, who argue that it is more likely that Luke dropped the reference to ‘twelve thrones’ in light of Judas handing Jesus over to the authorities than that Matthew added it. For this and more, see Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 135-139; Witherington, *Christology of Jesus*, 141.

<sup>641</sup> That the Twelve were known early on is acknowledged even by those who deny that they originated with Jesus. See, e.g., Schmithals, *Office of the Apostle*, 70. Thus, even if one does not agree about the pre-Markan origin of the passages noted above, this remains a datum in need of explanation. That the Twelve were known very early on among post-Easter Christians is also indicated by the surprisingly quick disappearance of the group. As Meier notes, the Twelve are scarcely referenced outside of the Gospels; they are referenced only in the aforementioned pre-Pauline tradition, in Acts, and in the vision recounted in Rev. 21.14 (Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 146-147), and the Twelve do not appear to have played a



brief, but prominent, role played by the Twelve in the early post-Easter period must be explained.

Whether one affirms or denies that Jesus appointed the Twelve, two other data must also be explained. The first is Judas's inclusion among the Twelve. He is said to be a member of the Twelve in what seem to be two separate pre-Markan traditions: the list of the Twelve (Mk. 3.16-19) and the mention of 'Judas, one of the Twelve' in Mark 14.43. Matthew and Luke, moreover, not only have Judas in their respective lists of the Twelve, but they also, precisely because he is named in these lists, implicitly include him in Jesus' promise to the Twelve that they will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The second datum is the Gospels' claim that Judas's handing over of Jesus was in fulfillment of the scriptures and that Jesus had foreknowledge of this event;<sup>642</sup> why is it that one finds such traditions linking Judas's handing over of Jesus to the scriptures?

### 6.5.2 Explaining the Data

How, then, should these data be explained? One way to explain these data is to trace Jesus' appointment of the Twelve to the pre-Easter period, i.e., one could hypothesize that it is historical. One could reason that the Twelve would have had a prominent role in Jesus' ministry and that this would explain why there were multiple, and apparently independent, early traditions that mention this group. The post-Easter reality of conflict, martyrdom, and the travel of the Twelve could explain why the Twelve did not, however, continue as a prominent group for very long.<sup>643</sup> Furthermore,

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significant role in later Christian texts (Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 182n79; Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 71).

This would appear to indicate that the Twelve had a prominent role only early on in the post-Easter period.

<sup>642</sup> See, e.g., Mk 14.18, 21; Matt. 27.9-10; John 13.18; 17.12; Acts 1.16-20.

<sup>643</sup> See Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 147: 'The reasons for the swift disappearance or total absence of the Twelve from most of the NT are unclear. Perhaps some members of the Twelve, like the martyred James, the son of Zebedee, died in the first decade after the crucifixion; and no attempt was made to replenish a foundational group that was not viewed as ongoing in the church. Once this happened, it would make sense to speak of influential individuals like Peter, but it made little sense to continue to speak of the Twelve in regard to the present situation of the church, as opposed to remembering the Twelve's activity in the life of Jesus or in the earliest days of the church. Other explanations for the early disappearance of the Twelve are also possible: e.g., the power of the Twelve as a group was eclipsed by the ascendancy of individual leaders like Peter or James, or some other members of the Twelve imitated Peter in undertaking a mission to Diaspora Jews in the East or the West – thus leaving no visible group of twelve leaders "on the scene" in Palestine'. Meier believes that the apparently rapid disappearance of the Twelve is a strong indication that the Twelve originated with Jesus. He argues that 'the whole way in which the tradition

tracing the origin of the Twelve to Jesus would offer an economical explanation for Judas's inclusion among the Twelve and the Gospel writers' framing of this event as one that fulfilled scripture. Judas's inclusion among the Twelve, along with his implicit inclusion in Jesus' promise to the Twelve that they will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, appears to reflect quite badly on Jesus.<sup>644</sup> One could explain his inclusion by arguing that Jesus really did select Judas to be a member of the Twelve, that this was considered to be an embarrassing but well-known historical event among early Christians, and that it was explained by claiming that Jesus had foreknowledge of Judas's actions and that these actions fulfilled the scriptures.<sup>645</sup> Finally, if one accepts that Jesus was indeed concerned with eschatology, as I do, then the appointment of the Twelve would be very much in line with Jewish eschatology, thus making it thoroughly plausible.<sup>646</sup>

One, however, could also account for the data by hypothesizing that Jesus' appointment of the Twelve was not historical. On this hypothesis, the origin of the Twelve could possibly be traced to a resurrection appearance experienced by a group of twelve disciples described in 1 Cor. 15.5.<sup>647</sup> Or, alternatively, one could argue that

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about the Twelve crests and ebbs in the NT period argues in favor of the Twelve's origin in the life of the historical Jesus rather than in the first Christian generation. If the group of the Twelve had arisen in the early days of the church and, for whatever reason, reached such prominence that its presence, unlike that of other church leaders (e.g., the Seven Hellenists, Barnabas, the prophets and teachers at Antioch), was massively retrojected into the Gospel traditions, one would have expected that the history of the first Christian generation would be replete with examples of the Twelve's powerful presence and activity in the church. The exact opposite is the case...The only reasonable conclusion one can draw to explain the cresting and ebbing of the references to the Twelve in the NT is the commonsense one: the Twelve are prominent in the story of Jesus because that is where they actually played a significant role. On the basis of their close relationship with Jesus, which they claimed had been restored and confirmed by a resurrection appearance, the role of the Twelve continued into the earliest days of the church; but it declined and disappeared with surprising rapidity' (*Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 146-147). Similarly, Scot McKnight, 'Jesus and the Twelve', *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11 (2001), 187, argues, 'First, we know so little about some of the Twelve that one must question the theory that they were invented wholesale. Why not use other names that are known, and why use persons who seem to have negligible influence? Second, why do the Twelve appear so infrequently in the NT?...If they were invented as authoritative figures to function at some institutional level, we are led to ask what institution this might have been and why they are not shown meeting this need?'

<sup>644</sup> See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 99; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 216; Becker, *Jesus*, 27. Judas's inclusion among the Twelve is considered to be one of the stronger, if not the strongest, indications that Jesus appointed the Twelve.

<sup>645</sup> See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 100; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 141-143.

<sup>646</sup> See Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 71-76.

<sup>647</sup> See, e.g., Vielhauer, 'Gottesreich und Menschensohn', 69.

Jesus' resurrection inspired or reinforced eschatological hopes among a group of followers out of which emerged the Twelve, who acted as representatives of this eschatological community and also experienced the resurrection appearance described in 1 Cor. 15.5.<sup>648</sup> One might then contend that the Twelve were retrojected into Jesus' ministry because of the eschatological consciousness of these post-Easter followers of Jesus.<sup>649</sup>

Furthermore, Judas's inclusion in the group could be explained several ways on this hypothesis, but the two most prominent views are that either (1) Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, did betray Jesus and was included among the fictional group of Twelve for a particular Markan purpose,<sup>650</sup> or (2) that Judas was part of the Twelve when they experienced a resurrection appearance but later became an apostate and was retrojected into Jesus' ministry along with the Twelve as the one who handed Jesus over to the authorities.<sup>651</sup> The later references to Jesus' foreknowledge of this event and the prophecies foretelling it could be explained as efforts to alleviate the embarrassment.<sup>652</sup> Finally, the rapid disappearance of the Twelve could be explained with precisely the same explanations offered above, i.e., conflict, travels, martyrdom, and even the ascendancy of certain individuals among or even outside of the Twelve (e.g., Peter or James).<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> Schmithals, *Office of Apostle*, 69-71.

<sup>649</sup> See, e.g., Bultmann, *Theology*, 37; John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 108-109; Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 71.

<sup>650</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 71-72, appeals to Mark's tendency to be critical of the Twelve, as well as suggesting that Mark was using the story of Judas, one of Jesus' intimate disciples, handing over of Jesus to encourage later Christians who might have been, or at least faced the possibility of being, handed over to the authorities by close friends or family.

<sup>651</sup> See, e.g., Schmithals, *Office of the Apostle*, 69.

<sup>652</sup> Alternatively, one could argue that the tradition about one of the Twelve handing Jesus over to the authorities arose out of a reading of Ps. 40.9 (verse 10 in the Hebrew). See, e.g., Vielhauer, 'Gottesreich und Menschensohn', 70-71. However, it seems more likely that the scriptures would be used to explain an embarrassing scenario rather than being used as the basis for fabricating such a scenario. For this and more significant flaws in Vielhauer's argument, see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 99-101; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 141-143, esp. 180n70.

<sup>653</sup> Schmithals, *Office of the Apostle*, 70. Interestingly, Schmithals argues that the rapid disappearance of the Twelve is an indication that they were not called together by Jesus, but only in the post-Easter period. As noted above, Meier and others have used the disappearance of the Twelve to argue for precisely the opposite conclusion. The absence of any mention of the Twelve in numerous Christian sources outside the Gospels is, in the view of Crossan and the Jesus Seminar, a strong indication that the Twelve do not go

### 6.5.3 The Preferable Hypothesis

So, which of these hypotheses is to be preferred? There are four reasons why I prefer the former. First, Jesus' appointment of the Twelve is historically plausible.<sup>654</sup> This in itself is not overwhelming evidence that the first hypothesis is the better one, but because the competing hypothesis is no more plausible while at the same time being, as I will suggest shortly, more complex, it is difficult to see why I should prefer it to the first.

Second, explaining Jesus' appointment of the Twelve as a post-Easter fabrication relies very heavily on speculation, as there appears to be no data upon which one could base the conclusion that the establishment of the group of Twelve was the consequence of a resurrection appearance. The only possible datum that I am aware of is 1 Cor. 15.5, which states that Jesus 'appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve'. But I see no reason why this should be taken to mean that the Twelve were constituted on the basis of the resurrection. Paul does not appear to state that the Twelve were constituted as a result of the resurrection appearance, but rather seems to imply that the Twelve existed as a group prior to it. Schmithals, perhaps aware of this, does not believe that the resurrection appearance was the catalyst for the formation of the Twelve, but instead claims that the Twelve were established in the post-Easter period before they experienced the resurrection appearance described in 1 Cor. 15.5. This claim, however, remains completely speculative, as it is not based on any data stating as much.

Third, the explanations as to how Judas came to be included in the unhistorical group of the Twelve are also speculative and complex. Notice, for example, 'the series of conjectures, for which there is no real evidence', as Allison puts it, in each of these explanations.<sup>655</sup> It is argued that Judas was part of the post-Easter group of the Twelve, that he became an apostate, and that his apostasy was retrojected into Jesus' ministry along with the group of Twelve. However, as Allison correctly asserts, 'One could just

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back to Jesus (Crossan, *Revolutionary Biography*, 109; Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 71). For what I believe are complete refutations of this view, see Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 181n71; Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 69-70.

<sup>654</sup> One might object that this is not, in fact, historically plausible. One could argue that Jesus' ministry was not eschatological, and so the appointment of the Twelve, an eschatological act, could not have originated with Jesus. I will address this objection below and explain why, in light of it, Jesus' appointment of the Twelve remains historically plausible.

<sup>655</sup> Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 68.

as readily imagine that the Twelve were a pre-Easter group, that Judas was a post-Easter apostate, and that the tradition made him one of the Twelve on the basis of Ps 41:9 (“Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me”).<sup>656</sup> Ultimately, on this alternative hypothesis, there is no basis in the data for any explanation of Judas’s inclusion among the Twelve; it remains complete conjecture, and this significantly weakens the hypothesis in my view.

Fourth, these theories accounting for Judas’s inclusion appear to be the result of circular reasoning, i.e., scholars who deny the existence of the Twelve *first* deny its existence and then proceed to explain how Judas came to be included in this group. They do not treat Judas’s inclusion in the Twelve as a datum which must be accounted for with a good hypothesis. So, for example, having already concluded that the Twelve has its origins in the post-Easter period, Vielhauer acknowledges the difficulty of Judas’s inclusion for his hypothesis before trying to deal with it.<sup>657</sup> Similarly, Schmithals concludes that ‘the twelve did not originally belong in the Jesus traditions’, and only then goes on to note:

One might respond to this by pointing to the figure of the traitor Judas, who certainly was one of the twelve and as one of the twelve already before the resurrection had left the circle of the δώδεκα. It would be unthinkable, one might say, that anyone should have added the compromising figure of the traitor to the circle of the first disciples, if Judas did not originally belong to it.<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>656</sup> Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 68n163. If one desired, one could even contend that Judas had, in fact, been part of a group of twelve disciples appointed by Jesus himself, that he became an apostate after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, and that this formed the basis of the story of his handing over of Jesus in fulfillment of prophecy. This, in my view, is an implausible hypothesis, but it shows how creative one can be when one works on conjecture alone.

<sup>657</sup> Vielhauer, ‘Gottesreich und Menschensohn’, 69-70. Having already concluded that the Twelve were ‘constituted’ only as a result of the resurrection appearance described in 1 Cor. 15.5, he goes on to note that Judas is characterized as the one who handed Jesus over (‘Verräter’) and states, ‘man betont, daß eine solche Angabe wegen ihrer Anstößigkeit doch kein Erfindung sein könne und daß sie deshalb die Existenz des Zwölferkreises vor Ostern beweise [citing Renstorf and Bornkamm]. Das ist in der Tat ein schwerwiegender Einwand gegen die Richtigkeit von 1Kor 15,5. Aber die genannte Charakterisierung des Judas in den Evangelien läßt sich m. E. auch, ja gerade unter der Voraussetzung der nachösterlichen Entstehung des Zwölferkreises verständlich machen’ (70).

<sup>658</sup> Schmithals, *Office of the Apostle*, 69.

Schmithals then offers his explanation for how the Twelve, with Judas as a member, came about in the post-Easter period.<sup>659</sup> Crossan, too, follows this same procedure.<sup>660</sup> The circularity in reasoning here is quite obvious to me.

These four reasons are why I am persuaded that the hypothesis that Jesus appointed the Twelve is far better than the hypotheses that trace the establishment of the Twelve to the post-Easter period. It is plausible; it is based on extant data; it seems to me to offer the better explanation for why Judas is said to be a member of this group and why his handing over of Jesus is said to be in fulfillment of the scriptures; and this hypothesis offers, in my view, a more economical explanation of the data than its alternatives. But there is one more point that I should address here before moving on, and that is the claim that this tradition is implausible given that Jesus' ministry was not eschatological.

One might argue that the origin of the Twelve should be traced to the post-Easter period, despite the deficiencies such a hypothesis might have, because Jesus' ministry was not eschatological, and given that the establishment of the Twelve is an eschatological act, it could not have originated with Jesus, i.e., it is highly implausible.<sup>661</sup> Therefore, one *must* look for an origin for the establishment of the Twelve in the post-Easter period. This reasoning, however, is far too circular. To begin with, there is nothing near a consensus among scholars that Jesus was not an eschatological figure. Therefore, for the great number of scholars who believe Jesus was an eschatological figure, his appointment of the Twelve remains plausible. Furthermore,

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<sup>659</sup> Schmithals, *Office of the Apostle*, 69-70.

<sup>660</sup> Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus*, 75: 'I accept Judas as a historical follower of Jesus who betrayed him. I do not think he was a member of the Twelve, because that symbolic grouping of Twelve new Christian patriarchs to replace the Twelve ancient Jewish patriarchs did not take place until after Jesus' death. There are, for example, whole sections of early Christianity that never heard of that institution. But different and independent early Christian traditions knew about him and, without any historical information whatsoever about it, described his death as it surely *must* have taken place: immediate, terrible, according to the Scriptures, and, with the happy coincidence of a real field near Jerusalem called the Field of Blood, in some connection with that place, right over there'. Meier, 'Circle of the Twelve', 668-669, notes Crossan's circularity in reasoning.

<sup>661</sup> See, e.g., Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 71: 'Most important, the role of the "twelve" is associated with the eschatological self-consciousness of the Christian community, which thought of itself as the new Israel living at the endtime, just before the final judgment. The Seminar doubts that such a notion originated with Jesus'.

because the hypothesis that the Twelve originated with Jesus and not in the post-Easter period is, in my view, far superior to those which trace it to the post-Easter period, I would feel compelled, even if one convincingly argued that Jesus was not an eschatological figure, to include the establishment of the Twelve as a part of his non-eschatological ministry. Perhaps this act was not actually eschatological, as Borg argues,<sup>662</sup> or perhaps Jesus was taking a well-known eschatological theme and transforming it.<sup>663</sup> Thus, regardless of whether Jesus was an eschatological figure, I remain convinced that he appointed the Twelve during his ministry.

#### **6.5.4 The Messianic Potential of the Appointment of the Twelve**

Jesus' appointment of the Twelve is significant for this study because it is almost certainly one of Jesus' potential Davidic messianic acts. Keeping in mind that Jesus' own intentions are not being considered here, one finds that his appointment of the Twelve could certainly have been perceived as being in line with the Davidic messianic role. The establishment of a group of twelve disciples has the potential to be understood as symbolizing the regathering and thus redemption of Israel, which was something regularly associated with the Davidic Messiah.<sup>664</sup> Furthermore, as I will note in the next section, appointing others to leadership positions among one's group was something that royal figures were known to do. Therefore, one may reasonably conclude that appointing an inner circle of Twelve disciples would have been consistent with the Twelve's view of him as the Davidic Messiah.

#### **6.6 Jesus Promises Twelve Thrones**

Having established that Jesus' appointment of the Twelve is historically probable, as well as the likelihood that Judas was a member of this group, there is consequently little reason to doubt that Jesus promised this group of Twelve that they would sit on (twelve) thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>665</sup> Because a promise

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<sup>662</sup> Borg, *A New Vision*, 126-127.

<sup>663</sup> Or perhaps it is an eschatological remnant from an earlier part of Jesus' ministry when he had an eschatological outlook like the Baptist, one that was possibly later transformed and given a non-eschatological meaning by Jesus.

<sup>664</sup> See 3.4.1 above. For more on this expectation, see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 96-98; Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 71-75, 232-233.

<sup>665</sup> Q 22.28-30: 'You who have followed me will sit .. on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel'.

that Judas would sit on a throne judging the tribes of Israel would likely reflect upon Jesus even worse than Judas's simple inclusion in the Twelve, it seems very likely to me that Jesus actually made such a promise.<sup>666</sup> Moreover, the aforementioned disappearance of the Twelve early in the post-Easter period, which almost certainly included at least the death of James the son of Zebedee and the absence of Judas from the Twelve,<sup>667</sup> suggests that the promise of thrones would not likely have been preserved had it been a post-Easter fabrication, as it clearly was not, and could no longer be, fulfilled. Therefore, I find little reason to doubt the historicity of Jesus' promise to the Twelve.

It hardly needs to be stated that this promise probably had just as much potential, if not more, to be considered a Davidic messianic act as Jesus' appointment of the Twelve. Not only was there a ubiquitous belief in speculations about the Davidic Messiah that he would have a throne and royal authority, but there also appears to be parallels to the kingly authority that Jesus could have been seen as exercising in making this promise when one looks at the actions of some of the Davidic messianic figures discussed above. Menahem, for example, 'equipped himself with such an intimidating bodyguard, typical of the tyrant-king',<sup>668</sup> and Athronges had four brothers whom he appointed as 'generals and satraps' and who were subordinate to him as their king.<sup>669</sup> If

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<sup>666</sup> See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 99; Witherington, *Christology of Jesus*, 141; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 138. Meier also believes that Matt. 19.28/Lk. 22.30 is unlike what one finds in either the Judaism(s) of Jesus' day or in the first generation of the post-Easter period, i.e., he believes it fulfills the 'criterion' of dissimilarity (*Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, 137-138).

<sup>667</sup> If Judas did not die before Easter he was almost certainly no longer a part of the Twelve after he handed Jesus over to the authorities.

<sup>668</sup> Mason, note 2721 on *J.W.* 2.434. It is worth noting his additional comments again: 'These δορυφόροι could be understood more neutrally as "bodyguards" or as the "armed thugs, henchmen" of a tyrant—as here. Notwithstanding the etymology reflected in my translation, the word had an established usage for the intimidating guards that a king and especially a tyrant gathered around himself' (Mason, note 1653 on *J.W.* 262).

<sup>669</sup> Again, I find it worthwhile to offer again Mason's commentary: 'Satraps (from Old Persian kshathrapavan, "protector of the country," where the first term means "country") were provincial governors in the Persian empire, under the king. Josephus continues his sarcastic tone by portraying Athronges as a would-be Oriental despot, with "governors" and "generals" doing his bidding. The scope and loftiness of his ambition (in contrast to those of mere local strongmen) are among his distinguishing features. It is impossible to tell from this rhetorical portrait whether the man actually cultivated contacts in the Parthian empire (perhaps the Judean diaspora there), which is conceivable, or whether Josephus supplies the Oriental flavor only for dramatic effect' (note 381 on *J.W.* 2.61). Cf. the Egyptian and his bodyguards (*J.W.* 2.262; Mason, note 1653 on *J.W.* 262 states: 'These δορυφόροι could be understood more neutrally as "bodyguards" or as the "armed thugs, henchmen" of a tyrant—as here. Notwithstanding the etymology



Jesus has the authority to, and did, in fact, assign thrones of judgment to the Twelve, it seems quite probable that they would believe that he would also have a throne and a more prominent role than they, that role likely being that of king;<sup>670</sup> in fact, this promise might very likely have been the catalyst for James and John's request in Mk. 10.35-40. Appointing thrones to the Twelve can certainly, therefore, be considered to be behavior that was in line with Davidic messianic expectations and thus consistent with the Twelve's belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship.

### **6.7 The Incident in the Temple**

Jesus' authoritative action in the Temple, known as 'the cleansing of the Temple', is found in all four Gospels.<sup>671</sup> Here I present the Markan version:

And they came into Jerusalem. And going into the Temple, he began to cast out those selling and those buying in the Temple, and the tables of the moneychangers and the chairs of those selling the doves he overturned, and none was free that he should carry a vessel through the Temple. And he taught and was saying to them, 'Is it not written, "My house is called a house of prayer for all nations"? And you have made it a den of robbers'. And the chief priests and scribes heard and were seeking a way that they might kill him. For they were afraid of him, for all the crowd was being astonished by his teaching. And when evening came, he went out of the city'.

That Jesus did, in fact, perform some such action in the Temple is so widely accepted by scholars that in most works its historicity is hardly discussed for more than a few sentences, if at all.<sup>672</sup> There is less agreement, though, about what Jesus' intention was in

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reflected in my translation, the word had an established usage for the intimidating guards that a king and especially a tyrant gathered around himself').

<sup>670</sup> See Davies and Allison, *Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 599-600, whose comments are noteworthy despite the fact that they are aimed more at determining something about Jesus' intentions than the Twelve's view of him: 'And that Jesus conceived of himself as some sort of king would seem to be implicit in the fact that he evidently chose twelve disciples. What did he intend by such an act? He wanted to create a symbol for the eschatological restoration of Israel (cf. Sanders, *Jesus*, pp. 98-106). The important point is this: Jesus himself stood outside the symbolic group and was undeniably its leader. (Recall that he alone was arrested and crucified – a not insignificant fact.) Who then did he take himself to be? It is hard to avoid the inference that he thought of himself as the leader-to-be of the restored people of God, a destined king'. See also Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 308; Witherington, *Christology of Jesus*, 142.

<sup>671</sup> Mark 11.15-19; Matt. 21.12-16; Luke 19.45-48; John 2.13-22.

<sup>672</sup> It is plausible; it is likely multiply attested (cf. John 2.13-22); it does not appear to be consistent with post-Easter attitudes toward the Temple; and it accounts for Jesus' arrest with ease (For all of this, see Klyne R. Snodgrass, 'The Temple Incident', in *Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus: A Collaborative Exploration of Context and Coherence*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Robert L. Webb [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 429-435). For attempts to deny its historicity, see Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 291-292; David Seeley, 'Jesus' Temple Act', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 55 (1993) 263-283. For Snodgrass's refutation, which makes ample reference to other scholarly literature refuting this overly-skeptical view, see 'The Temple

performing this act. However, as I am not investigating Jesus' intentions here, I need not enter into this debate.<sup>673</sup> I need only to demonstrate that Jesus' action in the Temple could have been perceived as a Davidic messianic action.

That the Temple incident was potentially messianic seems to me to be even more certain than its historicity. It was demonstrated earlier that numerous texts envisage the Davidic king and Davidic Messiah as one linked to the Temple. It was also illustrated above that several historical Davidic messianic figures who arose around the time of Jesus asserted their kingship in part through establishing a link with the Temple.<sup>674</sup> Of course, this is not to say that this is the only way one could interpret Jesus' action in the Temple, and it certainly does not indicate that Jesus intended for his act to be interpreted in this manner. However, what all of this does indicate is that, yet again, one is confronted with potential Davidic messianic behavior on the part of Jesus. One has very good reason to believe, therefore, that his engaging in an authoritative act in the Temple would have been consistent with the Twelve's belief in his Davidic messiahship, and, in fact, they might have even expected some such act on his part on the basis of their belief.

## **6.8 Additional Potential Davidic Messianic Behavior**

There are two other acts of Jesus that one may describe as potential Davidic messianic behavior. I have put my discussion of these in a separate section because, although I consider these acts to be historically likely, I would understand why others might be more uncertain.

### **6.8.1 Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem**

The first act is Jesus' riding into Jerusalem upon an ass. There are two reasons why I think it is more likely than not that when Jesus entered Jerusalem to royal acclamations, he did so on an ass. First, it seems that something should have served as the catalyst for this royal acclamation. One could speculate as to why on this trip to Jerusalem his following decided to engage in such behavior, but his entry upon an ass

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Incident', 435-439. For another comprehensive discussion of the incidents historicity, see Jostein Ådna, 'Jesus and the Temple', in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 3, *The Historical Jesus*, eds. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2638-2654.

<sup>673</sup> See Ådna, 'Jesus and the Temple', 2654-2665, for a discussion of the various interpretations of Jesus' Temple action.

<sup>674</sup> For all of this, see 3.4.1 above.

would seem to be a quite plausible catalyst.<sup>675</sup> Second, it is often noted that because the biblical prophecy from Zech. 9.9 that Jesus is said to have fulfilled in the manner of his entry was not interpreted messianically in the sources clearly dated to before the Gospels, the narrative seems more like the result of an historical event being interpreted through the lens of scripture rather than the creation of a fictional story on the basis of an explicit messianic prophecy.<sup>676</sup> Therefore, I think that Jesus probably entered Jerusalem upon an ass.

The messianic potential of the entry is, I think, fairly clear. Entering Jerusalem on an ass could certainly be understood as a royal act, given that such an entry would have royal connotations in both a Jewish and Roman context.<sup>677</sup> Furthermore, even though Zech. 9.9 does not appear to have been given a messianic interpretation until after Jesus' ministry, it at least speaks of a royal figure, and likely even a Davidic king. Therefore, the entry was certainly consistent with the Twelve's belief that Jesus was the Davidic Messiah.

### **6.8.2 The Baptist's Identification and Jesus' Reaction**

I ended the last chapter by suggesting that it is perhaps more likely than scholars have imagined that the Baptist identified Jesus as the Davidic Messiah of his preaching. Without suggesting that Jesus saw himself as the Davidic Messiah as a result of this identification, I would like to suggest here that in light of this identification, Jesus' (at least initial) positive reaction to the Baptist is a significant potentially Davidic messianic aspect of his ministry. Most scholars, regardless of whether they see Jesus as an eschatological figure, appear to agree that Jesus initially had a positive reaction to the Baptist and his message.<sup>678</sup> Moreover, I suggested above that Jesus perhaps even began his (eschatological) ministry in large part because the Baptist identified him as the Davidic Messiah, and that he very likely at some point traced his authority to the Baptist.

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<sup>675</sup> It does appear to evoke the manner in which Solomon rode to his anointing (1 Kgs. 1.33). See Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 344; Kinman, 'Jesus' Royal Entry', 398-401.

<sup>676</sup> Kinman, 'Jesus' Royal Entry', 402.

<sup>677</sup> See Kinman, 'Jesus' Royal Entry', 396-418.

<sup>678</sup> Taylor, *The Immerser*, 277-278, 299-316; Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 230-238, esp.236-237; Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 34-36; Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 178-180.

If Jesus did, in fact, reacted positively to the Baptist after he had identified him as the Davidic Messiah, then this could be regarded as potential messianic behavior. As I illustrated previously, Davidic kings were regularly anointed by prophets; the first king of Israel, Saul, was anointed by a prophet;<sup>679</sup> David was anointed by a prophet;<sup>680</sup> and every Davidic king of Israel likely experienced some similar sort of anointing.<sup>681</sup> During the Second Temple period, there appears to be no extant evidence that historical Davidic messianic figures were anointed by prophets, but one of the most important messianic claimants who arose shortly after this period, Simon ben Kosiba, appears to have been identified as the Davidic Messiah by a respected leader, rabbi Aqiba.<sup>682</sup> Somewhat analogously, if someone like the Baptist, who seems to have been a popular prophet, identified Jesus as the Davidic Messiah, then it is not difficult to imagine that, even though this was not strictly an anointing as in the case of Davidic kings, this could certainly have been viewed as an anointing of sorts by those who had known about the Baptist's identification of Jesus. Thus, Jesus' positive reaction to this quasi-Davidic messianic anointing may have been something that would have served as confirmation of that status to the Twelve.

## **6.9 The Interplay Between Jesus and the Twelve**

This analysis of Jesus' potential Davidic messianic behavior, taken together with the findings in the previous chapter concerning the Twelve's view of Jesus, allows one to establish a picture of the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve, and the picture that emerges is very much like that which was evident in the making of biblical Davidic kings and historical Davidic Messiahs. Without intending to present a strict chronological account of events, and without suggesting that one can confidently establish the cause-and-effect relationship between these events, one can discern a plausible basic outline of this interplay.

### **6.9.1 My Preferred Interplay**

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<sup>679</sup> 1 Sam. 10.1.

<sup>680</sup> 1 Sam. 16.13.

<sup>681</sup> See note 296 above.

<sup>682</sup> See p. 70 above.

The interplay appears to have started when the Baptist identified Jesus as the Davidic Messiah of his preaching and, as a result, at least some of those who would come to make up the Twelve began to follow Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. Given what is known about the dyadic personality, this might have played a significant part in Jesus' role formation. For his part, Jesus acted positively towards the Baptist, and this could have been understood as an affirmation of the Baptist's identification. Furthermore, Jesus' ministry centered on the kingdom of God and favored the poor and vulnerable, and he likely selected twelve disciples to act as an inner circle, all of which is potential Davidic messianic behavior. At some point, speaking on behalf of this group of twelve, Peter affirmed Jesus' Davidic Messiahship; this might have served to reinforce for Jesus, a dyadic personality, that his role was that of the Davidic Messiah. At another, James and John requested seats at Jesus' right and left when he comes in his glory/kingdom, a request that probably stemmed from Jesus' promise that the Twelve would sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel, itself a potential Davidic messianic act. Finally, on what ended up being his last trip to Jerusalem, Jesus rode into the city, perhaps upon an ass, amidst the royal acclamations of a group of his disciples, which included the Twelve, and he later performed a provocative, potential Davidic messianic act in the Temple. Thus, from the very first the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve was one that revolved (at least in part and probably significantly) around Jesus' Davidic messianic status.

I understand that some might find my historical reconstruction of this interplay to be too tentative and thus unpersuasive. Therefore, I would like to offer to those readers another picture of this interplay, one which does not rely on my more controversial conclusions about the Baptist and the early parts of Jesus' ministry, but nevertheless is one that is likely still to have started at some early point in Jesus' ministry and revolved around his Davidic messianic status.

### **6.9.2 An Alternative Interplay**

It seems likely that Jesus began to preach about the kingdom of God very early on in his ministry, if not immediately. Similarly, his ministry to the poor, being closely tied to his kingdom preaching, was likely a feature of Jesus' ministry from the first.

Furthermore, it seems plausible to suggest that Jesus would have appointed his inner circle of twelve in order to assist him in his ministry at some early stage of it. This early behavior could certainly have caused the Twelve to view him as the Davidic Messiah, or at least have caused some speculation among them about whether he might be the Davidic Messiah. At some point, speaking on behalf of this group of twelve, Peter affirmed Jesus' Davidic Messiahship; this might have served to reinforce for Jesus, a dyadic personality, that his role was that of the Davidic Messiah. At another, James and John requested seats at Jesus' right and left when he comes in his glory/kingdom, a request that probably stemmed from Jesus' promise that the Twelve would sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel, itself a potential Davidic messianic act. Finally, on what ended up being his last trip to Jerusalem, Jesus rode into the city on an ass amidst the royal acclamations of a group of his disciples, which included the Twelve, and he later performed a provocative, potential Davidic messianic act in the Temple.

I would not object to this only slightly revised historical reconstruction of the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve, even though I do not prefer it. In fact, if I did not believe that the Twelve came to view Jesus as the Davidic Messiah on the basis of the Baptist's identification, it would be the reconstruction that I myself would have offer. Interestingly, this alternative interplay is more in line with the sort of interplay that characterized the careers of the historical Davidic messianic figures than my preferred interplay. Thus, even if the Twelve only came to view Jesus as the Davidic Messiah at a later stage of Jesus' ministry and not from the very earliest period, it still would be reasonable to say that the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve began early on and continued throughout his ministry, and that it was one which revolved (at least in part and probably significantly) around Jesus' Davidic messianic status.

With a picture of the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve established, I may, finally, offer my answer to the Davidic messianic question.

## **Chapter 7**

### ***Conclusion***

#### **7.1 Summary of Findings**

The question that has occupied me in this study is: Was Jesus (at least) a Davidic messianic figure?<sup>683</sup> I intentionally approached this question in a fresh way, having found what I believe to be significant flaws in recent research on it. This new approach focused on the Twelve's view of Jesus and Jesus' behavior in the context of that view,

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<sup>683</sup> For a reminder of what I mean when I say that he was '(at least) a Davidic messianic figure', see pp. 2, 8 above.

i.e., I looked at the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve. I found that there are good reasons to believe that the Twelve viewed Jesus early on and throughout his ministry as the Davidic Messiah and that Jesus, throughout this time, behaved in ways that were consistent with this view, although I did not attempt to determine how Jesus intended his behavior to be understood.

It is my task now to demonstrate why I have come to believe that this interplay between Jesus and the Twelve provides a relatively solid basis on which to answer the Davidic messianic question positively. I will attempt to do so by considering two hypotheses. The first will be that Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure. The second will be that he was not. It is my belief that of these hypotheses, the first may be shown to be the far better one.

## **7.2 My Hypothesis**

The hypothesis that Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure explains the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve plausibly and economically. It provides a clear explanation as to why Jesus was doing and saying potential messianic things. A Davidic messianic figure would, quite obviously, do and say the sorts of things in line with that role. This might seem somewhat tautological, but the hypothesis simply explains Jesus' behavior that easily. Furthermore, seeing Jesus as a Davidic messianic figure is without question historically plausible. As illustrated above, there are numerous Second Temple Jewish texts that reveal expectations for a Davidic Messiah and several examples of historical Davidic messianic figures around the time of Jesus. The presence of a Davidic messianic figure is, therefore, quite plausible. Thus, Jesus' behavior and his role in the interplay described above is explained with simplicity and historical plausibility.

The Twelve's belief in Jesus' Davidic messiahship is likewise simply and plausibly explained on this hypothesis. It is not at all difficult or far-fetched to imagine that the Twelve would have viewed Jesus as a Davidic messianic figure if he was, indeed, one. Just as other historical Davidic messianic figures were identified by their followers as Davidic Messiahs, so, too, would the Twelve have identified Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. One has, therefore, a simple and historically plausible explanation for the Twelve's view of Jesus and their role in the interplay.



In addition to explaining these two data with simplicity and historical plausibility, this hypothesis also appears to have significant broader explanatory power, offering an explanation as to why Jesus was crucified as ‘the king of the Jews’. As noted earlier, it was not necessary to label an agitator as a royal pretender in order for the Romans to deal with the agitator; it is, thus, the *titulus* itself, and not simply the crucifixion, that must be explained.<sup>684</sup> Seeing Jesus as a Davidic messianic figure would account for his execution specifically as ‘the king of the Jews’ simply and plausibly.

Finally, it must be observed that the findings concerning *both* the dyadic personality *and* the making of kings and Davidic messianic figures support the hypothesis that Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure. If Jesus had been identified as the Davidic Messiah by significant others like the Twelve, then it is plausible that he would have taken up this role as a part of his group-formed identity. In fact, it could be suggested that the Twelve’s view of Jesus might have inspired Jesus’ behavior as much as Jesus’ behavior inspired the Twelve’s view of him. Furthermore, as noted above, the making of kings and Davidic messianic figures appears to be one that involved an interplay between an individual’s actions and how others viewed this individual, with the group viewing the individual as their king or Davidic Messiah and the individual behaving in a manner consistent with that view.<sup>685</sup> This process seems to be very much in line with that which I observed was involved in the making of Jesus as a Davidic Messiah.

In the end, it seems to me to be quite reasonable to conclude that Jesus was a Davidic messianic figure. It explains simply and plausibly why he was viewed as the Davidic Messiah and why he behaved in ways consistent with this view, i.e., with the Davidic messianic role; it has broader explanatory power, accounting for Jesus’ crucifixion as ‘the king of the Jews’; the picture that emerges of Jesus and his movement is very similar to that of other Davidic messianic figures of the period; and the

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<sup>684</sup> The importance of explaining Jesus’ crucifixion as ‘the king of the Jews’ is commonly noted. See, e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 294-318; Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 8, 232-234; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 784.

<sup>685</sup> See 3.3.1 above.

hypothesis can be supported with cultural and anthropological findings. Thus, this hypothesis is, in my view, quite strong.

### **7.3 The Alternative Hypothesis**

The hypothesis that I laid out above is obviously not the only one available, as one could attempt to explain the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve with the hypothesis that Jesus was not a Davidic messianic figure.<sup>686</sup> Hypothesizing that Jesus was not a Davidic messianic figure could certainly explain the data. Jesus' potential Davidic messianic behavior could be explained by noting that Jesus' potential messianic words and deeds are not *necessarily* messianic; his behavior could be understood in non-Davidic messianic ways. One could argue that when these potential messianic words and deeds are interpreted through the lens of Jesus' other words and deeds, one finds indications that they should not, in fact, be seen as Davidic messianic words and deeds. Furthermore, the Twelve's Davidic messianic view of Jesus could be explained by suggesting that this belief was the result of the Twelve misconstruing for some reason Jesus' potential Davidic messianic words and deeds as actual Davidic messianic words and deeds, thus leading them to identify mistakenly Jesus as the Davidic Messiah.<sup>687</sup>

Why, then, do I prefer the former hypothesis to this one? Keeping in mind that proving or disproving hypotheses is virtually impossible in historical Jesus studies, I will attempt simply and concisely to explain why I have come to believe that the former hypothesis is preferable to this one.

### **7.4 The Preferable Hypothesis**

Although the alternative hypothesis explains the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve, there are four reasons why I prefer the first hypothesis to this alternative. First, the alternative hypothesis seems to me to be significantly more complex than the former, requiring one to posit additional hypotheses to explain the data. I say this because it is

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<sup>686</sup> There are, of course, numerous forms that this hypothesis could take. What I will present now, however, is a line of reasoning that I think would be common to most forms of this hypothesis.

<sup>687</sup> It should be kept in mind that I concluded that the Baptist's identification of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah of his preaching was the best explanation for why others, including some of the Twelve, began to view Jesus as the Davidic Messiah. But I also was open about the fact that this conclusion is more tentative than the conclusion that the Twelve saw Jesus as the Davidic Messiah early and throughout his ministry. Therefore, when considering this alternative hypothesis, I do not consider the Baptist's identification of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah to be something that *necessarily* requires an explanation.

very likely that the Twelve would have been aware, just as modern scholars are, that Jesus' words and deeds were not *necessarily*, rather than *potentially*, Davidic messianic, i.e., that figures who were not Davidic Messiahs could do and the sorts of potential Davidic messianic things that Jesus was doing and saying. Moreover, the Twelve would almost certainly have known of Jesus' other teachings, including those that, in the above hypothesis, serve as the lens through which a modern historian might attempt to interpret Jesus' potential Davidic messianic words and deeds as being non-Davidic messianic. Therefore, in order to maintain this alternative hypothesis, one must posit additional, conjecture-based hypotheses; one must explain why the Twelve misunderstand and misidentify Jesus; one must explain why they did not understand that Jesus' behavior really points to him being something other than a Davidic messianic figure; one must explain either why Jesus did not discourage them from maintaining their misguided view of him, or, if he did, why the Twelve nevertheless continue to view him as the Davidic Messiah; and, in either case, one must explain why Jesus continued to maintain this inner circle of followers even though they were misguided in their expectations for and view of him. Whatever explanations one gives, however, would remain highly speculative; but speculating about such matters seems entirely unnecessary to me given that there is a simpler yet (at least) equally historically plausible hypothesis available, namely, the former.

Second, it seems to me that the only way for one to explain the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve on the alternative hypothesis is first to draw conclusions about Jesus' own intentions prior to offering the explanation. If Jesus was believed to be the Davidic Messiah by his closest followers, and likely a larger group of disciples as well, if he did and said things that were in line with the Davidic messianic role, and if, to add to this, he was executed as a royal pretender/Davidic Messiah, then he is virtually by definition a Davidic messianic figure. The only way to get around this is to suggest that it was not Jesus' intention to be understood in this way. However, this is probably not the best way to go about matters. Conclusions about what Jesus might have intended with any particular word or deed are highly tentative. I would prefer not to explain the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve on the basis of such tentative conclusions about

Jesus' intentions when it can be explained quite simply and plausibly without doing so. In other words, it seems to me to be far wiser first to explain the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve before attempting to determine Jesus' intentions, and not the other way around.<sup>688</sup>

Third, the alternative hypothesis appears to require that one accept a fairly narrow understanding of Davidic messiahship, something that seems less and less viable as one learns more and more about Second Temple Jewish messianic expectations. I concluded earlier that it is likely that Jesus said and did a relatively significant amount of potential Davidic messianic things throughout his ministry.<sup>689</sup> To argue that Jesus was not a Davidic messianic figure because other aspects of his ministry point away from this role presumes that these other things *could not* be done or said, or more responsibly phrased, would be unlikely to have been done or said, by a person taking up the Davidic messianic role. I would suggest, however, that this presumption is unreasonable. Messianic expectations, as I demonstrated earlier, appear to have been more fluid and to have involved much more category mixing than this hypothesis allows. Therefore, even if other aspects of Jesus' behavior were not clearly in line with Davidic messianic expectations, it does not follow from this that he was not a Davidic messianic figure.<sup>690</sup> The narrow understanding of Davidic messiahship seemingly required by this hypothesis thus makes it problematic in my view.

Fourth, and this is admittedly my most subjective reason for preferring the first hypothesis, I am uncomfortable with the level of special pleading that I feel is required by the second hypothesis. It seems to me that one is essentially saying, 'Yes, Jesus did and said potentially Davidic messianic things throughout his ministry; yes, the Twelve viewed him as the Davidic Messiah because of what he was saying and doing; yes, Jesus continued to do and say potentially messianic things; yes, the Twelve maintained their

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<sup>688</sup> In fact, letting the conclusions drawn on the basis of the interplay between Jesus and the Twelve serve as the context in which to understand Jesus' intentions would make understanding Jesus' intentions far easier in my opinion, as these conclusions could act as a control on the scholar's interpretation of Jesus' words and deeds.

<sup>689</sup> See chapter 6 above.

<sup>690</sup> At most, it might suggest that the Davidic messianic role was not the primary one that Jesus was taking up, but rather was one aspect of a greater role, which would be in line with the sort of category mixing that was not uncommon at the time.

belief in Jesus as the Davidic Messiah; and yes, Jesus was crucified as a royal pretender. *But...* I simply would not be comfortable with this sort of reasoning. I would feel as though I am explaining *away* data rather than simply *explaining* data.

Fifth, and finally, positing that Jesus was not a Davidic messianic figure would require one to endorse a hypothesis that resembles far too closely a Monty Python movie, and I say this only half-jokingly. I think here of *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, in which the lead character, Brian, is mistaken for a (Davidic?) messianic figure, even though he never took up that role, acts in ways that the crowds interprets as messianic, even though this was not his intention, and is executed as a royal pretender, even though he was not. Any hypothesis that makes my historical work resemble this closely something from the minds of Monty Python is one that I would like to avoid!<sup>691</sup>

It is for all these reasons that I am convinced that the first hypothesis is the preferable one.

### **7.5 The Making of Jesus the Davidic Messiah**

I stated clearly in my introduction that this study is not at all a 'life of Jesus'. It nevertheless does shed light on one significant aspect of the historical Jesus' life and ministry, namely, his Davidic messianic status. It is fitting, then, I think, to offer a brief historical narrative based on the findings of this study describing how Jesus came to be a Davidic messianic figure.

It seems likely that Jesus' rise to Davidic messianic status began with John the Baptist. The Baptist announced the imminent coming of the Davidic Messiah, and one cannot know exactly why, as there is no extant evidence available to answer this question, but the Baptist identified Jesus as the Davidic Messiah of his preaching. This identification of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah by the Baptist caused some of the Baptist's disciples to shift their allegiance from him to Jesus. They viewed and began to follow Jesus as the Davidic Messiah because their former leader had ascribed him that status. Because Jesus was likely a dyadic personality, the Davidic messianic status ascribed to him by the Baptist, along with the Baptist's disciples, probably heavily influenced Jesus' role formation; in fact, it might have been the very thing that led Jesus

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<sup>691</sup> Not that I didn't thoroughly enjoy *Life of Brian*!

to start his own (eschatological) ministry. After Jesus had been identified by the Baptist as the Davidic Messiah, he began to act in that role. He started preaching about the kingdom of God and favoring the poor and vulnerable in both word and deed. At some point, probably fairly early on in his ministry, Jesus appointed twelve disciples as an inner circle, some of whom were formerly disciples of the Baptist, and he even promised them thrones of judgment. As Jesus continued to act in the role of the Davidic Messiah, the Twelve's belief in his Davidic messianic status was reinforced and strengthened, and they openly expressed it to Jesus. As this belief was expressed in various ways to Jesus, it likely, in turn, reinforced to Jesus that the role in which he was to act was that of the Davidic Messiah. Towards the end of his ministry, Jesus continued to act in the Davidic messianic role, riding into Jerusalem on an ass and engaging in some sort of provocative act in the Temple. This, however, was as far as Jesus' career as a Davidic Messiah would go. The Romans, as they had done in the past and would do again in the future, executed Jesus as a royal pretender.

This historical narrative describing the making of Jesus the Davidic Messiah might not be persuasive to others, either in whole or in part, but it is my best attempt to make sense of the evidence at my disposal. How Jesus might have viewed this Davidic messianic role and how this role fits within, or encompasses, other roles that he took up, are fascinating and significant questions, but they are beyond the scope of this work. However one answers them, though, the findings of this study are, I think, significant. They might not provide a basis for Andrew's definitive and faith-filled declaration, 'We have found the Messiah', but I think that they allow historians to say with a fair degree of confidence that in Jesus 'we have found a Davidic messianic figure'.

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